

Does Intercultural Competence Matter?
New Perspectives on Relationship-Building in Unarmed Civilian
Protection

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Abstract

Objective: Previous research has shown that building positive relationships with locals is crucial for the effectiveness and personal safety of Unarmed Civilian Peacekeepers/ Protectors (UCPs). The present study investigated how UCPs attempt to build such relationships, what role intercultural competence plays and what challenges UCPs face in this endeavor.

Methods: Situated within the grounded theory methodology, semi-structured interviews with 12 former and current UCPs from three different non-governmental organizations were conducted. Data analysis followed common open and selective coding procedures.

Findings: Results suggest that UCPs' main strategies for building positive relationships with locals are finding similarities with the locals, being respectful, and, most importantly, behaving in open-minded ways. Intercultural competence proved integral to building positive relationships with locals, with most interviewees associating it with self-awareness. The most commonly reported challenges in building positive relationships with locals include feelings of intense stress and pressure, and a propensity for abandoning a balanced perspective on the given conflict. Curiously, team-internal relationships were viewed as much more volatile and prone to conflict than relationships with locals, especially in moments of loneliness, boredom and consensus decision-making.

Conclusion: While positive relationships with the locals are the bedrock of Unarmed Civilian Peacekeeping/ Protection, and intercultural competence plays a crucial role therein, the present study also highlights the troubles of building and maintaining them.

Keywords: unarmed civilian peacekeeping; unarmed civilian protection; accompaniment; relationship-building; intercultural competence; cross-cultural competence; intercultural sensitivity; cultural intelligence

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Acronyms

AMG	alias of an interviewee in the present study
BAM	alias of an interviewee in the present study
CQ	Cultural Intelligence
DMIS	Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity
EUB	alias of an interviewee in the present study
FEA	alias of an interviewee in the present study
FSS	alias of an interviewee in the present study
GBJ	alias of an interviewee in the present study
HMG	alias of an interviewee in the present study
ICAPS	Intercultural Adjustment Potential Scale
ICQ	Interpersonal Competence Questionnaire
IDI	Intercultural Development Inventory
KEA	alias of an interviewee in the present study
MHP	alias of an interviewee in the present study
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OOB	alias of an interviewee in the present study
NP	Nonviolent Peaceforce
PBI	Peace Brigades International
RER	alias of an interviewee in the present study
RJJ	alias of an interviewee in the present study
RQ	research question
SPSI	Social Problem Solving Inventory
UCP	Unarmed Civilian Protection
UCPs	Unarmed Civilian Protectors
UN	United Nations
UNITAR	United Nations Institute for Training and Research

I. INTRODUCTION

In the 2015 ‘Report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations,’ the United Nations (UN) acknowledged that “unarmed strategies must be at the forefront of UN efforts to protect civilians” (p. 37). One such strategy with significant potential is *Unarmed Civilian Peacekeeping/ Protection* (UCP). Broadly speaking, UCP involves “deploying unarmed civilians before, during, and after violent conflict, to prevent or reduce violence, provide direct physical protection to other civilians, and strengthen or build local peace infrastructures” (United Nations Institute for Training and Research, 2017, p. 30). In general, two categories of UCP activities can be distinguished: (a) the protection of civilians in conflict areas and (b) assisting the various parties in coming to a solution to the conflict, sometimes referred to as the “reactive dimension” and “proactive dimension,” respectively (Julian & Schweitzer, 2015, p. 1; United Nations Institute for Training and Research, 2012, para. 2; Venturi, 2015, p. 62). UCP has already been used successfully to deter police brutality towards peaceful demonstrators during national elections in Nepal (United Nations Institute for Training and Research, 2017, p. 130), to protect human rights activists in Guatemala from violence (Miguel Vallés, 2011, p. 36), to prevent civilian casualties during the Balkan wars (Schweitzer, 2009b, pp. 100-103, pp. 140-150) or to promote the peace process in Mindanao (Taberné, 2012, p. 7), to name a few examples.

Arguably central to UCP’s success is *building positive relationships* with all parties involved in a conflict as well as with the local population. Positive relationships can be defined as “task oriented, and characterized by trust, confidence, mutual benefit and cooperation” (Furnari, 2014, p. 60) and “with some degree of shared goals” (Furnari, 2015, p. 26).¹ The significance of building these kinds of relationships beyond one’s own battalion has long been acknowledged in the literature on traditional military peacekeeping, conducted by the UN and other intergovernmental actors mostly with military troops and a few civilian personnel (see Bellamy, Williams & Griffin, 2004, p. 144; Dobbie, 1994, p. 125; Johnstone, 2011, pp. 175-176; Pushkina, 2006, p. 142). Yet as Furnari (2015) highlights, military peacekeepers face two dilemmas in building positive relationships: Firstly, the political goals of their respective governments or intergovernmental organizations are “often in opposition to local perceptions and needs” (p. 27). Secondly, the mere act of carrying a weapon can hinder relationship-building. In contrast, Unarmed Civilian Peacekeepers/ Protectors (UCPs) are largely free from both of these concerns as their mandate focuses mainly “on protecting civilians and

¹ Furnari actually uses the term ‘good relationships.’

supporting local work” (Furnari, 2015, p. 27) through nonviolent techniques. In fact, both UCPs and military peacekeepers tend to believe in the superiority of relationships over weapons for their success (Furnari, 2014, p. 228). Therefore, Wallis (2015) calls for building “relationships of mutual trust all the way up the chain of command” (pp. 41-42) of the armed groups involved in a conflict. Others see in UCPs’ relationships even the potential to establish communication and connections among different conflict stakeholders, societal actors and international mediators (Furnari, Oldenhuis & Julian, 2015, p. 8).

How can positive relationships be built effectively on the local level in the context of conflict and violence? One possible precondition might be intercultural competence, i.e. “the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (Deardorff, 2006, pp. 247-248). Scholars of military peacekeeping have claimed that an awareness of cultural similarities and differences and behaving in respectful ways on an equal footing are critical to positive relationships with locals (Duffey, 2000, p. 151; Rubinstein, Keller & Scherger, 2008, p. 545). Accordingly, several case studies on the intercultural competence of military peacekeepers or lack thereof (e.g. Duffey, 2000; Haddad, 2010; Hohe, 2002; Tomforde, 2010; Yalçınkaya & Özer, 2017) and proposals for improved training in this area (Curran, 2013; Duffey, 2000; Leeds, 2007) have been produced.

However, the recognition granted by the military peacekeeping literature to culture and intercultural competence for building positive relationships and mission success is hardly reflected in writings on UCP so far, even though most UCP missions rely heavily on foreign staff living and working together with locals (Julian & Schweitzer, 2015, p. 3). While Furnari (2014, p. 253) judges “knowledge of and sensitivity to local cultures and languages” to be one pillar of good relationships between peacekeepers and locals, a strong link between intercultural competence and relationship-building is solely observed by Howard and Levine (2001):

How effective an organisation on the ground will be, often boils down to how individuals within the organisation (on the ground) not only understands [*sic*] both the current context and historical framework of the local population and the culture, but is [*sic*] able to parlay that understanding into a relationship on the ground with the local population. (p. 243)

In contrast, other publications in the field generally focus on questions of staff recruitment and development. For instance, a training manual developed jointly by Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) does explicitly

underscore the central role of intercultural competence in forming positive relationships with local actors and within the – usually culturally diverse – UCP teams (United Nations Institute for Training and Research, 2017, p. 176). Simultaneously, however, the training manual calls intercultural competence a “key personal quality” required from and located in prospective UCPs, alongside for instance resilience, courage, empathy, and humility (United Nations Institute for Training and Research, 2017, pp. 174). Schirch (2006, p. 83, pp. 88-92) and Mahony (2006, p. 135, pp. 137-138) concur with UNITAR in the belief that capable UCP candidates should possess intercultural competence but disagree to some extent on the need for training. According to Birkeland (2016, pp. 47-48), merely one out of five examined non-governmental organizations (NGOs) engaging in UCP include specific intercultural components in their training. Thus, to date, there is only limited discussion on the role of intercultural competence for relationship-building and the overall success of UCP missions. Intercultural competence is generally viewed as but one of many desirable traits of UCP candidates. Yet if the chances of success are to be raised in UCP missions, it appears that more attention needs to be drawn to questions of culture in general, and intercultural competence in particular.

Therefore, the purpose of the present study is to shed light on the role of intercultural competence in UCP in the context of building positive relationships with locals. To this end, I explore UCPs’ perceptions of the impact of culture on their daily work in the field, what constitutes intercultural competence in their eyes, and how they cope with their multi-cultural work environment. The present study builds to a large extent on the pioneering work of peace and conflict researcher Ellen Furnari (2014) on relationships with locals in the peacekeeping sector. It also follows her methodological approach by using semi-structured interviews with current and former UCPs as well as UCP experts from a grounded theory approach.

Within the scope of a Master’s thesis, the aim is to contribute to the literature on UCP in the following manners: Firstly, the present study expands the theoretical understanding of UCP by introducing intercultural competence concepts from the field of psychology. Secondly, it provides further empirical data on how peacekeepers build positive relationships with locals. Thirdly, it will also examine the possible downsides and pitfalls in this endeavor.

The thesis is structured as follows: After this introduction, Chapter 2 begins by defining and conceptualizing UCP in more detail. After a brief review of its effectiveness, current theoretical debates are highlighted, with a specific focus on relationship-building. In the ensuing section, the leading psychological models of intercultural competence will complete

the theoretical and empirical backdrop against which the present study is undertaken. The chapter finishes with the research questions. Chapter 3 introduces the methodology and the methods used while also including a reflection on limitations and my own role in the present study. Chapter 4 presents the results obtained as well as a discussion thereof. Lastly, Chapter 5 summarizes the main insights and places them in the bigger picture.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter establishes the theoretical and empirical background of the present study. First of all, a closer look at UCP's history and definitions is taken, as well as at evidence for its effectiveness and theoretical underpinnings such as relationship-building. Then, psychological conceptions of 'culture' and several models of intercultural competence are discussed successively. Lastly, the research questions are presented.

II.a. Unarmed Civilian Protection

II.a.i. History of UCP

Modern UCP's most well-known forerunners and inspiration were groups of local activists in India, referred to as 'peace armies,' who were devoted to Mahatma Gandhi's nonviolence teachings and sought to mitigate and resolve conflicts in their own as well as in neighboring communities (Clark, 2009, p. 90). Although Europeans and North Americans had thought of comparable strategies at least since the World Wars (Julian & Schweitzer, 2015, p. 2), it was during the civil wars of Latin America in the 1980s that UCP gained global recognition. Not a single anti-government activist in Guatemala accompanied by foreign Peace Brigades International (PBI) volunteers was killed, despite the country's history of forced disappearances and murders (Martin, 2009, p. 96; Peace Brigades International, n.d.). Similar effects were seen in Nicaragua where allegedly none of the communities hosting foreigners were attacked by the Contras guerilla forces (Mel Duncan, personal communication, August 20th, 2015; see also Wallis, 2015, p. 38). Intergovernmental and governmental organizations slowly adopted UCP into their missions during the Balkan wars of the 1990s (Julian & Schweitzer, 2015, p. 2) while growing efforts to "mainstream" UCP have been made from the beginning of the millennium onward (Venturi, 2015, pp. 61-62).

The majority of scholars therefore attribute the rise of modern UCP to NGOs (e.g. Julian & Schweitzer, 2015, pp. 3-4), observing an expansion from the bottom up rather than down from the top.² PBI is credited with initially popularizing UCP while NP is regarded as the main actor lobbying for mainstreaming UCP today (Nonviolent Peaceforce, n.d.; Venturi, 2015, p. 62).³ Nevertheless, as numerous other NGOs are now providing UCP as well (Julian &

² The expansion of UCP was likely pushed forward by the call for UN military and police peacekeepers to be permitted to actively prevent violence against civilians made in the Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (United Nations, 2000, p. x).

³ To be fair, PBI has also launched four new projects since 2013 (Peace Brigades International, n.d.).

Schweitzer, 2015, pp. 6-7), some disagreement over what constitutes UCP remains, as is reported subsequently.

II.a.ii. Definitions of UCP

The idea of deploying peacekeepers devoid of any weapons and armor is known under several different names such as international protective accompaniment (Koopman 2014), civilian peacekeeping (Schirch, 2006), proactive presence (Mahony, 2006), third-party nonviolent intervention (Julian & Schweitzer, 2015, p. 2), and UCP (United Nations Institute for Training and Research, 2017), to name a few. Although “accompaniment and presence” is typical of all organizations providing UCP (Julian & Schweitzer, 2015, pp. 4-5; see top left corner in Figure 1), UCPs have a wider repertoire of activities at their disposal. These include monitoring, capacity building and, notably, relationship-building, as can be seen in Figure 1. Depending on how proactive UCPs’ mandate exactly is, their tasks can even extent to “local-level shuttle diplomacy” (Venturi, 2015, p. 61) or “community security meetings” (Julian &

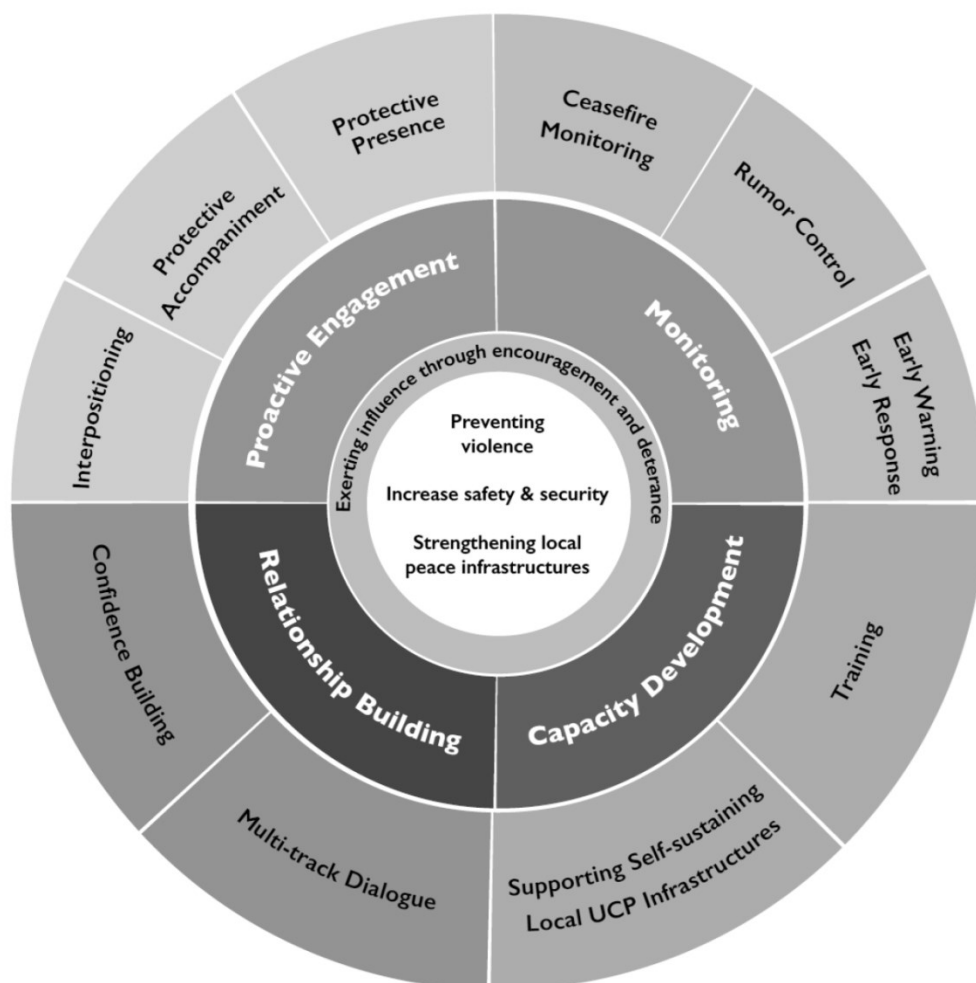


Figure 1. The goals (center) and different methods and activities of UCP, according to NP (drawn from Birkeland, 2016, p. 12).

Schweitzer, 2015, p. 1). Obviously, UCPs themselves relinquish the threat and use of violence in each and every case as *nonviolence* constitutes the single most important value shared by all organizations engaging in UCP (Julian & Schweitzer, 2015, p. 4). All in all, UCP can be described as “a strategic mix of key nonviolent engagement methods, principles, values, and skills” (United Nations Institute for Training and Research, 2017, p. 16).

UCPs receive special pre-deployment training after passing rigorous screening processes (Birkeland, 2016, pp. 46-48). They frequently come from outside the communities affected by the conflict or even from overseas, providing them with a special protective status as internationals (Furnari & Julian, 2014, p. 5). Usually, their deployment is contingent on invitation from the affected communities (Julian & Schweitzer, 2015, p. 3). Nevertheless, “many projects also include at least a few national staff, with knowledge of the context [and] local languages” (Furnari & Julian, 2014, p. 5). Critically, the UCPs live and work with the communities or individuals they are assigned to protect, thereby both amplifying the protection and increasing the UCPs’ knowledge and understanding of local conflict dynamics (Furnari & Julian, 2014, p. 5). It should be noted, however, that the relationship between peacekeepers and protected civilians is not entirely unidirectional. In fact, time and time again experience has shown that the civilians are also protecting the peacekeepers, for example by warning them of potentially dangerous situations (Gehrmann, Grant & Rose, 2015, p. 57), sharing other important information with them (Furnari, 2006, p. 264), or simply by their own presence (Schweitzer, 2009a, p. 118). The local community, however, has to be made aware of the fact that the UCPs’ objective is not to provide humanitarian aid, resolving the conflict or enforcing a peace agreement signed in distant capitals. Rather, they “create a space in which peaceful mechanisms can be built” (Julian & Schweitzer, 2015, p. 3). At least in theory, they can be deployed at any moment in an armed conflict, i.e.

during early stages to prevent violence and protect those working for non-violent conflict,
during crisis situations to stop violence, de-escalate tensions and protect civilians, and at
later stages to help sustain peace agreements and secure safer space for peacebuilding.
(Furnari et al., 2015, p. 5)

How successful, then, is UCP in preventing violence against civilians and in assisting the local stakeholders in finding a lasting solution to the conflict and its underlying causes? The ensuing section provides a brief summary of research conducted into this matter.

II.a.iii. Effectiveness of UCP

Being still a relatively young peacekeeping approach mostly run by NGOs, UCP's effects have not yet been thoroughly researched by academics. However, some anecdotal evidence of the successes of UCP can be found in the majority of publications on the topic (for a broad variety of eye-witness accounts, see Mahony, 2006). Indeed, the largest body of evidence of UCP's effectiveness originates from NGOs themselves and therefore needs to be assessed with appropriate care. The few studies available (see Table 1 below) suggest that UCP is highly effective in protecting civilians and can decrease the conflict intensity and level of violence in some specific cases.

For instance, UCP was able to successfully shield human rights activists and civilians in Guatemala and Sri Lanka from attacks (Miguel Vallés, 2011, p. 36; Schweitzer, 2012, p. 8) and increase the perceived safety of protected communities in the Philippines (Beckman & Solberg, 2013, p. 3). Furthermore, UCP projects in Myanmar and the Philippines led to less violent and antagonistic behavior by military and rebel forces and paved the way for peace processes in both countries (Bächtold, 2016, pp. 19-20; Gündüz & Torralba, 2014, p. 12; Taberné, 2012, p. 7). Other positive effects include heightened trust and confidence among conflict parties in Guatemala or the Philippines (Mahony, 2006, pp. 30-31; Gündüz & Torralba, 2014, p. 13, pp. 46-47) and effective advocacy work in Guatemala (Miguel Vallés, 2011, pp. 8-9).

Nevertheless, obstacles remain in building the long-term capacity of local actors to replace UCPs once their mission ends (Gündüz & Torralba, 2014, p. 53). In addition, in some cases such as Colombia or Sri Lanka UCPs had little noticeable impact on the levels of violence or number of ceasefire violations (Mahony, 2006, pp. 30-31; Schweitzer, 2012, p. 8).

Authors	Year	Location	Study type	Main findings
Bächtold	2016	Myanmar	Qualitative, commissioned by NP	<p>(+) NP-supported civilian ceasefire monitoring project yielded positive behavior changes of ethnic armed groups and the Burmese army (p. 19) and directly affected the formulation and structure of a nationwide ceasefire agreement signed in October 2015, thereby contributing to peacebuilding on the macro-level (p. 20).</p> <p>(-) Yet many village monitors reported facing suspicion by their community and therefore sometimes have to keep their work secret, in turn increasing the security risks for them (pp. 17-18).</p>
Beckman & Solberg	2013	Philippines	Quantitative, survey, commissioned by NP	<p>(+) Communities which NP had worked with felt safer and better able to handle conflict, compared to those without NP involvement (p. 3).</p> <p>(+/-) However, due to a general improvement in the overall security situation in Mindanao during the time frame under investigation, the validity of these results is limited (p. 13).</p>
Gündüz & Torralba	2014	Philippines	Mixed methods, commissioned by NP	<p>(+) Positive recognition of NP by the communities, “armed actors on both sides confirm that the presence of a third party ‘watching over them’, including NP, has served to temper their behaviour” (p. 12).</p> <p>(+) Continuation of the peace process was partly attributed to NP’s work and to the trust it managed to build with and between the conflict parties and affected communities (p. 13, pp. 46-47).</p> <p>(-) NP’s goal of building the capacity of local actors to engage in protection of civilians themselves was hampered by the organization’s inherent superiority in logistics, relationships, and professionalism, amounting to a “dilemma” (p. 53).</p>
Janzen	2014	Various locations	Quantitative	<p>(+) Between 1990 and 2014, six deaths of UCPs were reported, one of which was a car accident (p. 55), with partisanship and explicit solidarity with one side increasing the death risk for UCPs (p. 56). The corresponding fatality rate was certainly far lower than for military peacekeeping, indicating that UCP either entails “significantly less risk of fatality than conventional UN (armed and civilian combined) peacekeeping” (p. 57) or that UCP is simply conducted in less volatile and dangerous areas. For example, some have argued that “in the majority of the cases, the missions are deployed when the intensity of the conflict is low” (Venturi, 2014, p. 8).</p>
Mahony	2006	Various locations	Review	<p>Mixed evidence of UCP’s effectiveness:</p> <p>(+) Positive impacts such as due process of law (El Salvador), confidence-building among conflict parties (Guatemala), improvement of prison conditions (Rwanda), less violence against civilians (Kosovo), military leaders ordering militia to restrain their actions (East Timor).</p> <p>(-) Violence levels were unaffected by international presence (Colombia), ceasefire violations</p>

				continued (Sri Lanka), violence resumed upon departure of UCPs (East Timor), or UCPs were expelled altogether (Haiti, Rwanda) (pp. 30-31).
Miguel Vallés	2011	Guatemala	Qualitative, commissioned by PBI	(+) High degree of satisfaction of local activists with the PBI's accompaniment, in particular in light of the deteriorating human rights situation in the country (p. 7, p. 36). (+) Furthermore, PBI's advocacy work "was one of the areas that received the most favorable assessment from the overwhelming majority of the [interviewees]" (p. 8). Indeed, some argued that successful advocacy had reduced the need for accompaniment (p. 9).
Reimann	2010	Philippines	Qualitative, commissioned by NP	(+) NP had a proven ability "to support and enhance local structures of cease-fire monitoring, early warning, cross-community dialogues, human rights protection" (p. 3).
Schweitzer	2009b	Balkans	Case study	(+) European Community Monitoring Mission and the Kosovo Verification Mission (1990s) rather successful at protecting civilians despite severe obstacles (pp. 100-103). (However, both were civilian peacekeeping missions implemented by governments and/or international organizations.) (+) NGO-run protective accompaniment well received by populations and sometimes more effective when coupled with other, more "proactive" activities, for example encouragement, humanitarian aid or dialogue work (pp. 140-144, pp. 149-150). (-) Short-term inter-positioning "with the goal of simply stopping a war has never worked so far" (p. 150).
Schweitzer	2012	Sri Lanka	Review, commissioned by NP	Mixed evidence of UCP's effectiveness: (+) UCP largely successful in accompanying and protecting civilians from violence, opening up space for activists to pursue their cause, and generally making communities feel safer (p. 8). (+/-) Local activists recognized the "gap" which NP's forced departure left in the conflict areas (p. 60). (-) No visible effect of NP's work with regard to child abductions and child soldiers because the "numbers of abductions and forced recruitments seem to have gone up and down irrespective of NP's presence in certain areas" (p. 8). (-) Additionally, respect for human rights did not improve among the conflict parties, either (p. 8).
Taberné	2012	Philippines	Mixed methods, commissioned by NP	(+) NP as a "catalyst" for advancing the peace process in Mindanao, "increased local ownership of the [peace] process, prompted confidence building and further peace advancements, and generally speaking alleviated the dire predicament of so many people" (p. 7).

Table 1. Overview of UCP evaluation studies. This list is not intended to be exhaustive.

Aside from the evaluations presented in Table 1, various case studies exist. Between 1997 and 2003, a rather unusual symbiosis between military peacekeeping and UCP took place with the Peace Monitoring Group in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea. Under the Australian military's leadership, unarmed "small-scale patrols of multi-ethnic, multi-national teams made up of military and civilians" were tasked with trust-building and dialogue facilitation (Gehrmann et al., 2015, p. 53). However, little is reported regarding the impact of those patrols. Several other qualitative case studies published in academic journals examine NP's work in Sri Lanka (Furnari, 2006), South Sudan (Easthom, 2015; Furnari et al., 2015), and Mindanao (Engelbrecht & Kaushik, 2015), as well as PBI's work in Sri Lanka (Coy, 1997), attesting to the interrelationships between activism and research in UCP. Although they generally mirror the essentially positive findings in Table 1, at least in Sri Lanka NP's positive impact was undermined by the overall deterioration of the security situation (Furnari, 2006, p. 266).

II.a.iv. Theorizations about UCP's effectiveness

As shown in the previous section, UCP can indeed be a useful approach in protecting civilians from violence and sometimes improving the security of conflict-affected communities. Ultimately, the question remains of what would make a peacekeeper enter a conflict area without any weapon. The initial key driving force of UCP was undoubtedly idealism, such as a belief in Gandhian values. Over time, however, scholars of UCP have made various attempts at discerning how it works, what can give UCPs both protection and leverage, and what conditions need to be met for achieving the best possible impact. In the following, the most influential explanations are reviewed, including deterrence, peacebuilding, impartiality and relationships.

Deterrence

The most highly acclaimed theorization was produced by Liam Mahony and Luis E. Eguren, who view *deterrence* as the foundation of UCP's success in preventing violence against civilians. Here, deterrence is evidently less about the possibility of UCPs retaliating with gunfire. Rather, "aggressors decide that the negative consequences of bad publicity and international pressure [brought about by the UCP witnesses] outweigh the advantages of attacking activists" (Martin, 2009, p. 93). Thus, deterrence on the ground depends on the plausible threat of international pressure. As depicted in Figure 2, international pressure is ideally aimed at the decision-making level of armed actors so that restraint then 'trickles down' the chain of command. In order to make the threat of such pressure credible, UCPs should not only keep a watchful eye on possible perpetrators but actively establish relationships with all domestic and international political levels (Eguren, 2009, p. 102). For

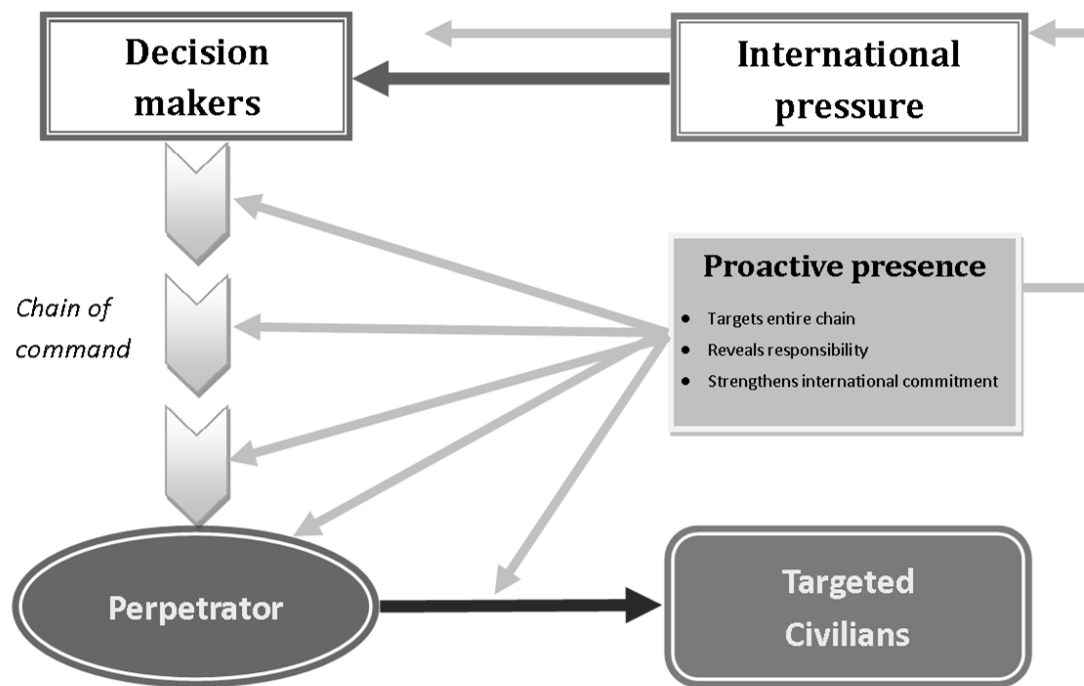


Figure 2. UCP and deterrence (adapted from Mahony, 2006, p. 15, "Proactive presence strengthens pressure at all levels").

instance, in one study communities reported “that passing information on to NP means it can reach ‘higher echelons’ of decision-making, which on their own they are not able to reach” (Gündüz & Torralba, 2014, p. 12). In another one, PBI was successful in directing the international community’s attention to human rights violations in Guatemala (Miguel Vallés, 2011, p. 8). However, UCP will not be able to offer much protection should the possible aggressor for some reason determine that the UCPs are not capable of creating substantial international pressure. Aside from this, the aggressor should ‘ideally’ act under government authority as state bodies are usually more probable to yield to international pressure than “lawless” armed groups (Eguren, 2009, pp. 103-104). Nevertheless, Mahony believes “that armed groups and paramilitary organisations are also sensitive to international concerns” as they might lose access to resources such as money and weapons (Mahony, 2006, pp. 18-19). Yet it remains somewhat doubtful whether a clear and identifiable chain of command, as presupposed in Figure 2, holds unequivocally true for all armed groups (see Wallis, 2015, p. 51).

In addition to increased international pressure, committing violence against civilians while UCPs are watching could also *backfire*: local public outrage could result in an upsurge of support for the civilians under attack and their cause (Martin, 2009, pp. 93-97). However, it seems questionable whether increased local support alone would have sufficed to improve the

situation of human rights activists in places like 1980's Guatemala, where forced disappearances and extrajudicial killings were widespread (Coy, 2012, p. 3).

Over time, deterrence has been supplemented by additional concepts. Some have argued that the human tendency to see oneself as a '*good*' person can be used to "engage with [armed groups] and help them turn their positive self-image into reality" (Wallis, 2015, p. 39) since non-state actors or vilified governments in particular might be less inclined to submit to international pressure. In a comparable line of reasoning, Mahony developed two new concepts to explain the workings of proactive forms of UCP: *encouragement* and *influence*. While the former is about "encouraging civil society's capacity to protect itself", the latter represents backing progressive factions of the perpetrator group (Mahony, 2006, p. 16). UCP can thus allow for civil society to seek conflict resolution themselves or for progressive members of the conflict parties to "promote policies of respect for civilians" (Mahony, 2006, pp. 26-27; *encouragement* also appears in Eguren, 2009, p. 102). For instance, NP's capacity-building for local actors in Mindanao has been perceived empowering despite the resource dilemma described previously (Gündüz & Torralba, 2014, p. 51), while NP's project in Myanmar highlight's the role of a progressive and more knowledgeable police chief in advancing the ceasefire monitoring (Bächtold, 2016, p. 17).

Peacebuilding

On a wider scale, it has also been argued that UCP can advance *peacebuilding* both directly by means of proactive work and indirectly as it "models a way of living that does not rely on violence," demonstrating that coexisting peacefully is perhaps not as impossible as it may appear (Julian & Schweitzer, 2015, p. 3). The potential of UCP at the intersection with peacemaking and peacebuilding has gained further attention in recent years. For instance, it has been maintained that UCP is able to complement Track 1 peacemaking efforts by focusing on the day-to-day lives of the local population which is often disregarded in higher level peacemaking processes (Furnari, 2015, p. 28). In addition, UCP can empower local activists to pursue their own peacemaking and peacebuilding endeavors free from fear for their lives and unaffected by foreign agendas (Furnari et al., 2015, p. 10), which bears resemblance to encouragement. In one case in Mindanao, community leaders were trained and enabled to negotiate with armed groups in instances of human rights violations against civilians (Engelbrecht & Kaushik, 2015, p. 50). Moreover, "UCP encourages local participation in peacekeeping, and by doing so strengthens the foundations of peacebuilding," which becomes ever more important when violence abates or when UCPs depart (Furnari et

al., 2015, p. 10). In this regard but also on a more general level, UCP can thus contribute to peacebuilding by connecting different actors and the civilian population – often hostile towards each other – and by building trust among them (Julian & Schweitzer, 2015, p. 3).

Impartiality

Impartiality and *non-partisanship* are often placed at the center stage in academic debates about UCP (second only to nonviolence, see ‘key principles’ in Figure 3). One evaluation noted that “armed actors on both sides stressed they feel that NP monitors and reports on both sides in a balanced way” (Gündüz & Torralba, 2014, p. 52). In turn, this helps to increase the peacekeepers’ credibility and reputation and thus their capacity to protect civilians (see Schirch, 2006, p. 61). Yet achieving impartiality is easier said than done, and the different organizations engaging in UCP tend to have slightly different understandings thereof (for a comparative study see Coy, 2012). To begin with, different groups in the conflict might commit more violence against civilians than others and hence be likely perceived as the main perpetrators (Schirch, 2006, p. 62). This is problematic since the imperative of good or no relations with all sides is seemingly in conflict with the urge to confront injustice. In the case of Israel/Palestine, for instance, some NGOs have been very careful not to be seen as one-sided due to their monitoring of human rights violations against Palestinians. Consequently,

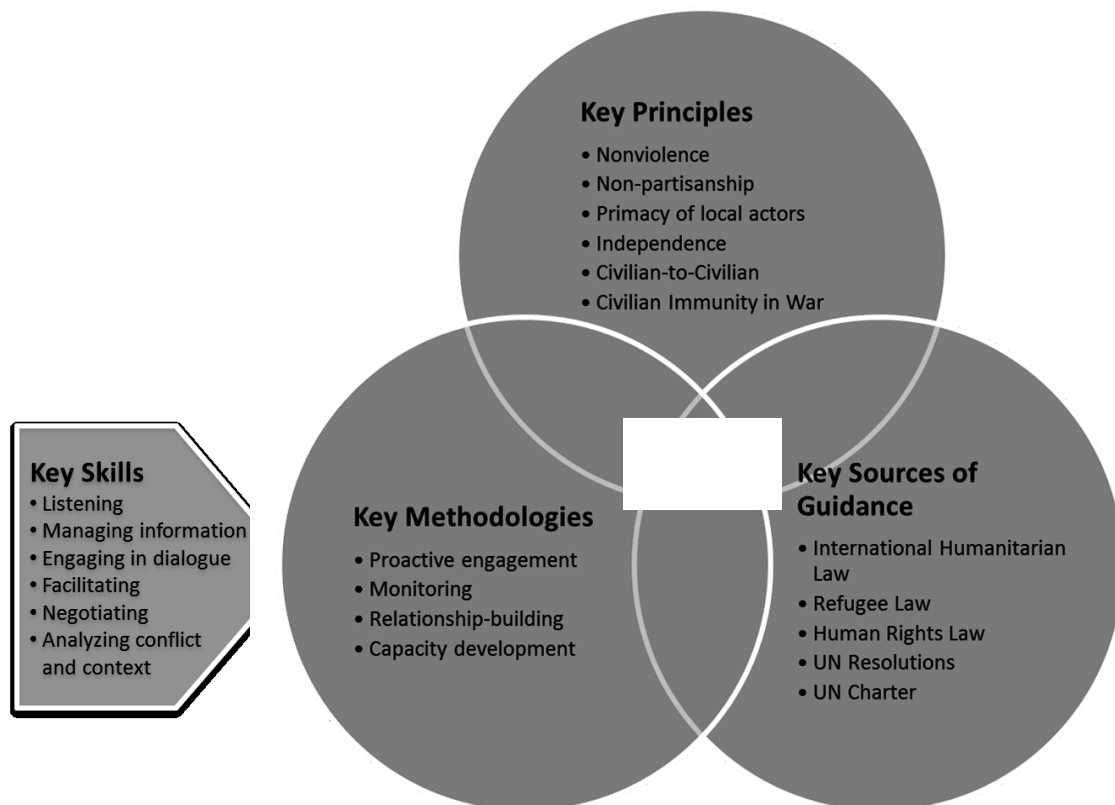


Figure 3. The spectrum of UCP (adapted from Furnari et al., 2015, p. 4.).

they are also working with Israeli civil society organizations and provide accompaniment to Israeli citizens as well (Schirch, 2006, p. 63). Secondly, there is a limit to how proactive UCP can be before sacrificing impartiality. If peacekeepers choose to resort to “activist strategies actions [*sic*] such as protests, petitions, or [garnering] media attention” or wish to change government policies, they have to expect harsh criticism on the grounds of partisanship (Schirch, 2006, pp. 63-64). Even more troublesome, the presence or involvement in illegal activities, for instance occupations or protests, can jeopardize the whole mission. Illegal activities provide the ruling elites with a convenient rationale for declining cooperation with such “criminal” UCPs and for expelling them: Examples from Guatemala and Sri Lanka have shown that foreign embassies are very reluctant to shield their nationals in such cases (Coy, 2012, p. 13). Indeed, the majority of mission deaths of UCPs occurred in organizations which were explicitly partisan, as noted above (Janzen, 2014, p. 56). To conclude, at least two solutions are thinkable. On the one hand, Coy (2012, pp. 14-15) advocates strict nonpartisanship as practiced by humanitarian organizations to maximize the peacekeepers’ leverage and support base and minimize threats to its reputation and legitimacy. On the other, Schirch (2006) argues that “civilian peacekeepers are impartial toward the groups in the conflict (they will protect everyone’s human rights), but not the outcome (they support an outcome of social justice and human rights for everyone)” (p. 64). In other words, “‘non-partisanship’ is an operational not a political principle” (Clark, 2009, p. 92). Whether the latter view is a slippery slope towards a form of biased activism remains unresolved.

Relationships

Finally, as discussed in the introduction, *relationship-building* and *trust-building* with all conflict parties and with the local population on the ground was promulgated by Furnari (2014, 2015) as a crucial ingredient to successful UCP.⁴ In her view, it is UCPs’ political credibility and their foregoing of weapons which enable them to reach out to locals, more effectively so than military peacekeepers (Furnari, 2015, p. 27). What is more, her research found “that good relationships and acceptance by local people was the core of [many UCPs’] security strategies” (Furnari, 2015, p. 27), increasing both the effectiveness and personal safety of UCPs. In line with this, Engelbrecht and Kaushik (2015) claim that “community work is the backbone for an effective protection strategy” (p. 46) and that relationship-

⁴ In the present study, local actors refers to local conflict parties (government authorities including troops, and armed groups), whereas local population is used to denote the local civilians not engaged in hostilities (including local NGOs), even though they might be regarded as parties or stakeholders to the conflict. “Locals” includes both local actors and the local population.

building and trust-building help promote norm and ceasefire compliance (p. 48), coming full circle to peacebuilding. Therefore, it might not come as a surprise that “core elements of PBI’s ‘protective accompaniment’ model are relationship building and capacity building [...], and to some extent monitoring activities” (Birkeland, 2016, p. 13). Similarly, relationship-building is now acknowledged as one of NP’s four key methods (see Figure 1 and Figure 3). NP conceptualizes relationship-building mainly as confidence building and multi-track dialogue. The former relates to lifting local individuals out of their ‘learned helplessness’ (Maier & Seligman, 2016) through activities aimed at empowering the locals (see Furnari, 2014, p. 229) whereas the latter means engaging in dialogue with key actors at the grassroots, social elite and political leadership level and forming a link between them (United Nations Institute for Training and Research, 2017, pp. 143-149).

From a more theoretical perspective, much of the emphasis on relationships within UCP literature reflects the reasoning of John Paul Lederach (2005), who specifically designates relationships as “both the context in which cycles of violence happen and the generative energy from which transcendence of those same cycles bursts forth” (p. 34). Thus, he argues that violence can only occur when the perpetrator rejects to believe that he and his actions are embedded in a wider network of social relationships. This is reminiscent of dehumanization, a social psychological concept in the context of interpersonal violence. Dehumanization “divests people of human qualities or attributes bestial qualities to them” (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara & Pastorelli 1996, p. 366), the likely outcome in both cases being cruel treatment right up to atrocities. It can be argued that dehumanization of an individual signifies the ultimate rupture of relationships: not only is any relationship rejected by the perpetrator, but it is also rendered impossible since the victim is not deemed human. Kelman (as cited in Haslam, 2006, p. 254) makes a similar argument, observing that dehumanization involves both denial of human identity and denial of connection.

However, recent controlled experiments have suggested that the matter is more complex: Waytz and Epley (2012) have found that it is in fact a strong feeling of connection to ‘close’ others that enables first the disconnection from ‘distant’ others and ultimately their dehumanization. These findings expand on previous work arguing for the coexistence, even coevolution of allegiance toward one’s ingroup and hostility towards outgroups (Choi & Bowles, 2007; Cohen, Montoya & Insko, 2006). Lederach (2005) seems to be intuitively aware of these nuances, noting “that the well-being of our grandchildren is directly tied to the well-being of our *enemy’s* grandchildren” (p. 35; emphasis added). Long-term peacebuilding

hence needs a fundamental re-imagination of the social relationships in conflict-affected areas, as well as recognition of their significance (Lederach, 2005, p. 35). To this end, some believe that UCPs' day-to-day work can provide locals with lived examples of positive relationships and peaceful dialogue with perceived foes, as described earlier (Julian & Schweitzer, 2015, p. 3).

A growing number of psychological studies are investigating a similar role model function in the form of extended contact and vicarious contact. Whereas the former relates to the "knowledge that an in-group member has a close relationship with an out-group member" (Wright, Aron, McLaughlin-Volpe & Ropp, 1997, p. 73), the latter refers to "observing in-group members having successful cross-group contact" (Mazziotta, Mummendey & Wright, 2011, p. 255). These two indirect variations of Gordon Allport's original 'contact hypothesis' might be particularly useful to improve relations between two different groups when direct contact between their members is not taking place, impractical or impossible (Dovidio, Eller & Hewstone, 2011, p. 148). This scenario is not unlikely to arise in situations of open hostilities and grave human rights violations.

Generally supported by empirical studies, several underlying mechanisms such as changing in-group norms or reduced intergroup anxiety have been proposed to explain the two hypotheses' promising impact on intergroup attitudes (see Vezzali, Hewstone, Capozza, Giovannini & Wölfer, 2014, for a comprehensive, integrative view). However, these two contact hypotheses postulate that it is an ingroup member who enjoys positive contact with an outgroup member. In the case of UCP, foreign UCPs are certainly not part of a local's ingroup, and local UCPs who belong to one's ingroup might be sub-categorized, i.e. "dismissed as an exception to the rule" (Wright et al., 1997, p. 76), or simply distrusted altogether as the example of civilian ceasefire monitors in Myanmar proved (Bächtold, 2016, pp. 17-18). Indeed, one could argue that UCPs themselves would highly benefit from positive extended or vicarious contact when trying to build relationships with locals. Since they are usually invited by the local population to intervene in the conflict, one can expect at least some degree of friendliness, trust and cooperation from at least some locals. Nonetheless, in order to achieve Lederach's (2005, p. 35) re-imagination of social relationships, UCPs would be well-advised to make a concerted effort to build positive relationships.

Another limitation of the extended contact and vicarious contact hypotheses stems from the unproven causal relationship between more favorable individual attitudes toward outgroups and sustainable peacebuilding. According to Ajzen and Fishbein's (2005, pp. 193-195)

‘reasoned action model,’ attitudes constitute merely one amidst a variety of factors determining an individual’s intention to perform a specific behavior, with general attitudes being less important than attitudes about the specific behavior in question. Even so, they admit that the significance of individual factors depends on the particular case and hence defies generalization (Ajzen and Fishbein, 2005, p. 195), rendering prediction even more difficult. Offering a way out of this dilemma, Dovidio et al. (2011) have suggested that changing norm perceptions may be more practical, efficient and effective, for an individual’s attitudes might be “too strongly crystallized” (p. 154) especially in protracted conflicts. Theoretically, Prislín and Wood (2005, pp. 675-684) have argued that three basic motivations, namely to understand the world, to connect to others and to be oneself, can each result in attitudes consistent with ingroup norms. Empirically, in their social identity theory-informed attitude framework, Hogg and Smith (2007, pp. 110-112) report that “attitude-related behavior” is closely linked to perceived ingroup norms for those participants who show strong identification with their ingroup. Since these might ironically be the same individuals who feel greatest outgroup hostility in conflict areas, changing perceived ingroup norms might be just as important as changing individual civilian’s attitudes towards their foes in UCP’s quest to peacebuilding. Yet it is unclear if this could be part of UCP’s sphere of action as it could easily be branded propaganda and add another layer to the impartiality debate illustrated above. Moreover, the practical implementation of such a project, for instance through a radio soap opera like ‘Musekweya’ in Rwanda (see Paluck, 2009), could prove a costly and time-consuming task for NGOs, which are habitually tight on budget.

Unless other actors such as international organizations, government authorities or some locals themselves step in and commit to this task, it appears that UCP is bound to continue focusing on building positive relationships and changing attitudes one person at a time for the foreseeable future. Yet only few studies into the most promising ways of building such relationships exist to date. For example, although devoting a whole chapter to “Best Practices in Field Relationships,” Howard and Levine’s (2001) advice remains largely at the organizational level. Furnari (2014) herself concluded her study with a call for further research into “how peacekeepers build ‘cooperative’ relationships” (p. 73). The peacekeepers and UCPs whom she interviewed, however, did provide some valuable suggestions:

perceptions of non-partisanship or impartiality; support for local efforts at addressing conflict; by knowledge of and sensitivity to local cultures and languages; time spent in the community; contact with a wide variety of local people; and staff remaining for longer periods in one community. (Furnari, 2014, p. 253)

The alternative, i.e. ignoring or failing to build positive relationships at all, carries the risk of imposing the UCPs' assumptions, judgments and preconceived solutions on the locals (see Schirch, 2006, p. 76). This, in turn, may jeopardize the whole mission. Moreover, if relationships exist with one conflict party only, the UCP mission might be criticized rigorously for taking sides where no sides should be taken (Schirch, 2006, p. 63). Even once established, positive relationships can still be undermined and ruined by careless and inconsiderate UCP behavior such as "the perception that peacekeeping missions are imposing solutions, lack of cultural sensitivity, and the presence and use of weapons and related equipment" (Furnari, 2014, p. 253). Similarly, Mahony (2006, p. 76) identifies "numerous factors" which can damage relationships especially between the local civil society and UCPs. Four of these, namely cultural insensitivity, "inability to speak the local language," "showing apparent contempt for [locals]," and "violation by mission staff of local ethical standards and codes of conduct (for example by visiting brothels, excessive drinking, dating local people)" (Mahony, 2006, p. 76), directly undermine trust and confidence in the UCPs.⁵

Intercultural competence

In summary, the above discussion highlights that a blatant lack of intercultural competence constitutes a serious threat to UCPs' relationships with locals and to their missions in general. Despite this, there is little discussion about intercultural competence itself in the UCP literature. For instance, Wallis (2010) mentions 'cultural sensitivity' alongside "sensitivity to the situation that you are going into, and an understanding of the political connotations" (p. 33) without informing the reader whether these are actually separate elements and what they mean in practice. Furnari (2014) uses the terms 'cultural sensitivity' and 'cultural appropriateness' (p. 120, pp. 176-179) solely in the context of providing support which contributes to local ownership of the conflict resolution process. Specifically, her "discussion of cultural sensitivity is less about day to day practices that affect acceptance [...] but rather is focused on the kinds of political, economic and social programmes supported, promoted or imposed by missions" (Furnari, 2014, p. 176). Furthermore, Mahony's (2006, p. 135, pp. 137-138) and Schirch's (2006, p. 83, pp. 88-92) influential treatises discuss 'cultural sensitivity' mostly on the margins as a component of recruitment criteria and training syllabus. The same holds true for the extensive NP Feasibility Study (Junge & Wallis, 2001, p. 264; Schweitzer, 2001, pp. 304-318), with the notable exception of Howard and Levine (2001). As mentioned in the introduction, they are convinced that UCPs need to be "able to parlay that

⁵ See a 2003 draft code of conduct for NP UCPs: http://www.pacedifesa.org/documenti/Np_codeof_conduct.pdf

understanding [of local context and culture] into a relationship on the ground with the local population” (Howard & Levine, 2001, p. 243). Anecdotes serve to justify their distinction between understanding and actual behavior: Sometimes UCPs with little understanding and knowledge were able to build positive relationships “because they come open-minded with a genuine interest and concern” (Howard & Levine, 2001, p. 243). Others with considerable understanding and language skills, however, failed due to their arrogance and dogmatism. Howard and Levine (2001) thus locate “personal attitude” (p. 243) as the decisive factor which can either undermine understanding or compensate for a lack thereof.

In addition, a joint NP and UNITAR training manual proposes a central role for intercultural competence in building positive relationships with locals and within the – typically culturally diverse – UCP teams (United Nations Institute for Training and Research, 2017, p. 176). Pragmatically referring to intercultural competence as “the ability to know (or be able to ask questions at appropriate times), what is considered appropriate in a specific context, and then act upon it” (United Nations Institute for Training and Research, 2017, p. 176), the authors are particularly concerned about cultural differences surrounding the concept of authority. Importantly, they also provide a list of “intercultural skills” which can be regarded as advice to prospective UCPs:

- suspending assumptions and value judgments;
- enhancing perception skills;
- practicing cultural humility;
- increasing tolerance for ambiguity;
- listening;
- recognizing multiple perspectives;
- developing multiple interpretations;
- learning to use multiple communication styles;
- meeting people where they are, rather than expecting them to meet you in your ways of doing things. (United Nations Institute for Training and Research, 2017, pp. 176-177)

Although no details about these intercultural skills are provided, they strongly pertain to ‘key UCP skills’ listed in Figure 3 such as listening, engaging in dialogue, negotiating or analyzing the context properly. UNITAR’s list of rather feasible skills, however, does lack conceptual depth. For example, ‘suspending assumptions and value judgments’ and ‘practicing cultural humility’ seem to be rather similar, as do ‘increasing tolerance for ambiguity,’ ‘recognizing

multiple perspectives,’ and ‘developing multiple interpretations.’ This is permissible given the very task-oriented purposes of the manual but it restricts the possibility for theoretical debates which could advance our understanding of UCP. Consequently, at this point it is worth examining the different approaches to intercultural competence taken by psychologists, which also enables comparison with the ideas of UCP scholars described above and, most importantly, paves the way for the empirical part of the present study.

II.b. Intercultural competence in Psychology

The ensuing review is structured as follows: as a starting point, various attempts at defining ‘culture’ will be discussed, including one possible explanation for the evolution of cultural differences. Thereafter, four selected conceptions of intercultural competence will be introduced briefly before their relevance for UCP is assessed.

II.b.i. Defining culture

Organizational and social psychologist Geert Hofstede defines culture as “the collective programming of the human mind that distinguishes the members of one human group from those of another. Culture, in this sense, is a system of collectively held values” (Hofstede, 1980, p. 24). Values are understood as invisible and frequently unconscious emotions guiding one’s preferences and judgements as to what is negative or positive, including the dichotomies evil-good, immoral-moral, and abnormal-normal (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010, p. 9). In contrast to values, practices “are visible to an outside observer; their cultural meaning, however, is invisible and lies precisely and only in the way these practices are interpreted by the insiders” (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 9). As shown in Figure 4, practices include symbols such as “words, gestures, pictures or objects” (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 8), real or mythological heroes who embody what is highly regarded by the group, and rituals “that are technically superfluous to reach desired ends but that, within a culture, are considered socially essential” (p. 9). According to this view, values are at the core of different manifestations of cultural differences but they do not per se constitute cultural differences (Hofstede, et al., 2010, p. 7).

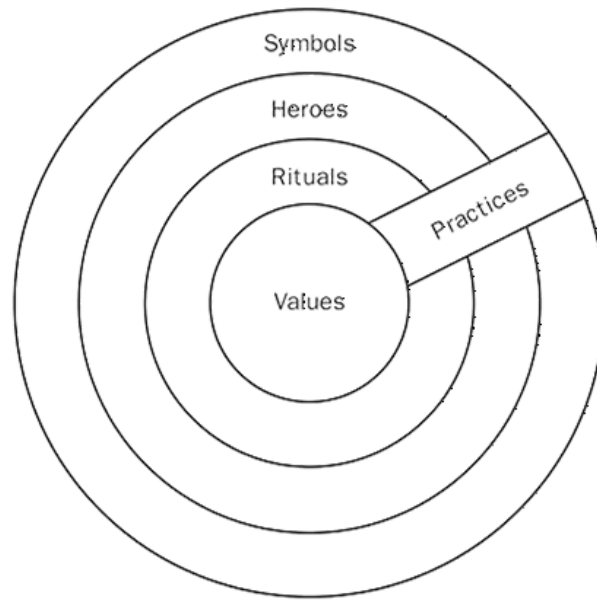


Figure 4. Manifestations of culture at different levels of depth. Onion model with more superficial layers (practices, i.e. symbols, heroes, and rituals) and a core (values) (drawn from Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 8).

However, culture can also be conceptualized without much recourse to its contents. For instance, for cultural psychologist Steven Heine (2012) culture refers to “any kind of information that is acquired from other members of one’s species through social learning that is capable of affecting an individual’s behaviors” (p. 3). Such information may include ideas, beliefs, customs, habits, technologies and even the practices mentioned in Figure 4. Whether values underlie these kinds of information is not of interest here. Instead, only the means of information transmission is relevant.

The term culture can also be used to denote a particular group of people “who are existing within some kind of shared context” (Heine, 2012, p. 3), i.e. people who are surrounded by or living in largely the same ‘cultural information.’ This is quite similar to Hofstede’s (1980, p. 24) idea of a collective mind programming on the basis of which members of different groups can be distinguished. Yet it is clear that such definition of culture leaves much space for ambiguity: the boundaries between these ‘cultural groups’ might not be clear-cut, group norms often do not predict individual behavior, and the cultural information transmitted can change over time (Heine, 2012, p. 4).

Summarizing these three different conceptualizations of culture as group membership, social learning, and a duality of visible and invisible factors is cultural psychologist Harry Triandis (1994a, cited in Kashima & Kashima, 1999, p. 78):

Culture is a set of human-made objective and subjective elements that in the past have increased the probability of survival and resulted in satisfactions for the participants in an ecological niche, and thus became shared among those who could communicate with each other because they had a common language and they lived in the same time and space.

This definition points to the adaptive quality of culture. On the one hand, certain cultural information which aided human survival and reproduction was passed on to other members of one's group and to the group's descendants through social learning, ideally increasing their chances of survival and reproduction. Indeed, it has been reasoned that those humans with the best social learning abilities were the likeliest to produce surviving offspring (Heine, 2012, p. 57).

On the other hand, the definition above also highlights the role of ecological and geographical conditions. As environmental challenges and opportunities may vary considerably from one geographical location to another, different groups of humans in different locations developed and passed on different cultural information. Over a sufficiently long period of time, these information differences will have manifested themselves in widely different social structures (see Heine, 2012, pp. 64-66). Culture, in this sense, can be regarded as the result of or response to "ecological forces" (Goodwin, 1999, pp. 32-33). To give an example, differences in the types of food available in different locations may condition different types of foraging behavior and food production which in turn help shape different gender values and gender labor norms (Heine, 2012, p. 63).

An adequate discussion of the manifold 'cultural' differences observable in different cognitive, behavioral and affective domains is outside the bounds of this thesis (for an introduction see Heine, 2012). Rather, for the aims of the present study it is necessary to understand how these differences can be dealt with for the mutual benefit of all sides involved in cross-cultural interactions. Hence, four conceptions of intercultural competence and their main postulations are presented in alphabetical order in the following. The selection of three of these (Cultural Intelligence, Intercultural Adjustment Potential, and Multicultural Personality) is based on the strong construct and predictive validity of their corresponding instruments over a number of different studies in various countries and with various samples, as evaluated by Matsumoto and Hwang (2013). The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity was included because of its fairly unique conceptualization (Hammer, 2015).

II.b.ii. Cultural Intelligence

Cultural Intelligence (CQ) “refers to a person’s capability to function effectively in intercultural environments” (Ang, Van Dyne & Rockstuhl, 2015, p. 278).⁶ More precisely, it reflects a “general set of capabilities” which is utilizable in all kinds of different cultural contexts and not just a specific one (Ang et al., 2015, p. 278). Akin to other multidimensional models of general intelligence, an individual’s CQ is composed of four factors:

Metacognitive CQ reflects the mental capability to acquire and understand cultural knowledge. Cognitive CQ reflects general knowledge and knowledge structures about culture. Motivational CQ reflects individual capability to direct energy toward learning about and functioning in intercultural situations. Behavioral CQ reflects individual capability to exhibit appropriate verbal and nonverbal actions in culturally diverse interactions. (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008, p. 5)⁷

Although the authors of CQ shun assigning different importance to these factors and assert their coequality instead (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008, p. 7), the motivational and the metacognitive factors do stand out: The former as the proverbial driving force behind all other factors (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008, p. 6; Leung, Ang & Tan, 2014, pp. 494-495), and the latter as the enabler of reflection and revision of one’s assumptions and behavior (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008, p. 5), respectively. At the same time, “the behavioral component of CQ may be the most critical factor that observers use to assess other’s CQ” (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008, p. 7) due to being the most visible one. CQ is allegedly filling a void left by other intelligence concepts such as social, emotional and classic cognitive intelligence “since the norms for social interaction vary from culture to culture” (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008, p. 4). For instance, cognitive intelligence is both much broader in applicability (Ang et al., 2015, p. 282) and does not address intelligence in terms of behavior or motivation (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008, p. 9) while an individual’s emotional intelligence is likely confined to a specific culture. Importantly, CQ is not a personality trait, i.e. neither stable nor static. Rather, “CQ refers to *malleable* capabilities” (Ang et al., 2015, p. 282; emphasis added) which can evolve and develop through training and firsthand intercultural experience in particular (see Ang et al., 2015, pp. 298-301 for an overview of approaches).

⁶ A slightly different conception of CQ is provided by Thomas et al. (2008) who define “cultural intelligence as knowledge and skills that are developed in a specific cultural (cross cultural) context, but the effectiveness of which in the production of culturally intelligent behavior is dependent on a culture general process element called *cultural metacognition*” (p. 127; emphasis in original). However, Ang and Van Dyne’s conception has been more influential overall (Ott & Michailova, 2016, pp. 12-13) and is thus presented here.

⁷ For each factor, subfactors have been identified as well (Van Dyne, Ang, Ng, Rockstuhl, Tan & Koh, 2012) but discussing these would go beyond the scope of the present study.

An individual's CQ is measured using the Cultural Intelligence Scale, a self-report survey of currently 37 items (Ang et al., 2015, pp. 280-281). This instrument was found to possess good construct validity (Ang et al., 2015, pp. 280-281) and to predict performance in different cultural environments satisfactorily (Leung et al., 2014, pp. 496-497, Matsumoto & Hwang, 2013, p. 856). Simultaneously, CQ scholars have been accused of neglecting theoretical debates and further conceptualization (Ott & Michailova, 2016, pp. 12-13). This, however, ignores the extensive research into multilevel models of CQ, mediators and moderators of CQ antecedents and CQ effects, and the mediating and moderating role of CQ itself (Ang et al., 2015, pp. 290-298).

II.b.iii. Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity

Hammer, Bennett and Wiseman (2003) define intercultural sensitivity as “the ability to discriminate and experience relevant cultural differences” (p. 422). Their Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) identifies six consecutive experiences or worldview stages of intercultural sensitivity which individuals exhibit but also along which they can progress and develop. In a ‘chronological’ order these six stages are: Denial, Defense, Minimization, Acceptance, Adaptation, and Integration (Hammer et al., 2003, pp. 423-426). Notably, the former three are characterized by an unquestioning attitude towards one's own beliefs and behaviors (ethnocentrism) whereas in the latter three the individual regards her beliefs and behaviors as only one possible and acceptable configuration among others (ethnorelativism).

In general, the more ethnocentric orientations can be seen as ways of avoiding cultural difference, either by denying its existence, by raising defenses against it, or by minimizing its importance. The more ethnorelative worldviews are ways of seeking cultural difference, either by accepting its importance, by adapting perspective to take it into account, or by integrating the whole concept into a definition of identity. (Hammer et al., 2003, p. 426)

According to the DMIS, interaction with culturally different others generates pressure for development along the worldview stages although such pressure might be ignored by the individual (Bennett, 2004, p. 11). Moreover, “the DMIS is not a model of knowledge, attitude, or skills” (Bennett, 2004, p. 6) because these elements are not sufficient to fully explain the differences between individuals. Instead, the model describes “how the assumed underlying *worldview* moves from an ethnocentric to a more ethnorelative condition, thus generating greater intercultural sensitivity and the *potential* for more intercultural competence” (Bennett, 2004, p. 11; emphases added). Therefore, knowledge, attitudes and behaviors are thus merely

manifestations of one's latent worldview (Hammer et al., 2003, p. 423). Since worldview refers to "one's experience of cultural difference" (Hammer et al., 2003, p. 423), reaching the next DMIS worldview stage means "attaining the ability to construe (and thus to experience) cultural difference in more complex ways" (p. 423). In other words, the six worldviews are best conceived of as lenses through which events are experienced and assigned meaning to, social interactions made sense of and normative judgements based on. Once greater intercultural sensitivity has been reached, the individual usually does not fall back onto previous stages or only temporarily (Hammer et al., 2003, p. 423). Similarly, progression along the stages does not happen in quantum leaps but supposedly step by step.

Both the emphasis on worldviews and the model's constructivist foundation render the DMIS distinct from other conceptualizations. Furthermore, the DMIS has unique implications for training: On the one hand, training should target worldviews and explicitly not knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Bennett, 2004, p. 11). On the other hand, training ought to be tailored to the individual's current worldview. For example, instead of providing sophisticated information about a different culture, an individual might actually first need to recognize that other cultures do exist (Denial stage) or that her own culture is a mere context (Minimization stage).⁸ Moreover, the DMIS' intercultural sensitivity is a necessary but insufficient condition for intercultural competence, i.e. "the ability to think and act in interculturally appropriate ways" (Hammer et al., 2003, p. 422). Rather, several concepts mediate between the two. Intercultural sensitivity is based on cognitive complexity, which is associated with the abilities to be 'person-centered' and show 'perspective-taking' (Bennett, 2004, p. 10). Both in turn condition the chances of successful intercultural communication.

Based on the DMIS, the self-report Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) was developed to assess the worldview stage "for individuals, groups, and organizations" (Hammer, 2011, p. 475), currently using 50 items. Notably, the instrument allows for calculating both a perceived score, i.e. an individual's perception of her intercultural sensitivity, and her actual score (Hammer, 2011, p. 477); the discrepancy between these two can then be used for feedback and training. The latest psychometric study finds "strong support for the [IDI's] cross-cultural generalizability, validity and reliability" (Hammer, 2011, p. 485). To date, however, only few studies have been conducted using the IDI to predict performance in different cultural

⁸ In this regard, it would be interesting to know the authors' opinion of attitude interventions based on the contact hypothesis.

environments (see Leung et al., 2014, p. 495; Matsumoto & Hwang, 2013, pp. 860-861; Zhang, 2014, p. 181), with Hammer (2011, pp. 484-485) reporting the most positive results.

II.b.iv. Intercultural Adjustment Potential

According to the authors of the Intercultural Adjustment Potential Scale (ICAPS), effective emotional regulation enables an individual to manage and cope with misunderstanding, frustration and conflict which are integral to living and working in a different cultural environment (Matsumoto et al., 2001, p. 485). Therefore, emotional regulation is supposedly “the gatekeeper skill for intercultural adjustment” (Matsumoto et al., 2001, p. 485), with adjustment defined as the level of subjective well-being during the process of adaptation to a new environment (Matsumoto, Hirayama & LeRoux, 2006, p. 388). It was reasoned that a variety of skills such as tolerance for ambiguity, monitoring behavior and reactions and foreseeing their consequences, openness, flexibility, and critical thinking complement emotional regulation (Matsumoto et al. (2001, p. 486). After the construction and refinement of the 55-item-long ICAPS only emotional regulation, openness, flexibility, and creativity⁹ emerged as factors, explaining less than 20% of data variance in the particular study (Matsumoto et al., 2001, pp. 503-506).

In light of this, boldly claiming “that the psychological constructs it assesses represent a pancultural set of skills necessary for intercultural adjustment” (Matsumoto, LeRoux, Bernhard & Gray, 2004, p. 283) appears misplaced. Nonetheless, the ICAPS has accumulated considerable empirical support for its usefulness in predicting psychological outcomes such as culture shock, homesickness and subjective adjustment for diverse samples (for overviews see Matsumoto & Hwang, 2013, pp. 857-858; Matsumoto et al., 2006, pp. 394-396). However, the possible link between intercultural adjustment and performance outcomes and the implications of the ICAPS for training are yet to be explicated. Lastly, the current ICAPS is yet to take into account that different emotion regulation strategies lead to different well-being outcomes (see John & Gross, 2004).

II.b.v. Multicultural Personality

The Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (MPQ) differs from the other concepts and measurements presented above in that it focuses on personality traits instead of capabilities, worldviews or skills. After extensive psychometric testing of an initial instrument (Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2000, 2001), five factors were retained: (i) cultural empathy “points

⁹ Matsumoto et al. (2006, p. 391) use the term ‘critical thinking’ instead of creativity.

to the ability to empathize with the feelings, thoughts and behaviours of members of different cultural groups;” (ii) open-mindedness, i.e. “an open and unprejudiced attitude towards outgroup members and towards different cultural norms and values;” (iii) “social initiative, defined as a tendency to actively approach social situations and to take the initiative;” (iv) emotional stability, which “refers to a tendency to remain calm in stressful situations versus;” and (v) flexibility, entailing being “able to switch easily from one strategy to another” and being interested in the unfamiliar (Van der Zee, Zaal & Piekstra, 2003, p. 78).

Van der Zee and Van Oudenhoven (2013) claim that personality traits can predict performance in intercultural environments via their impact on affect, behavior and cognition. More precisely, emotional stability and flexibility can function as stress-buffering traits, reducing the effects of stressful intercultural situations on affect, behavior and cognition (Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2013, p. 936). In contrast, open-mindedness, cultural empathy and social initiative can function as social-perceptual intercultural traits, resulting in emotions, behaviors and thinking conducive to coping with such stress. Nonetheless, it remains unclear whether to what extent the MPQ personality traits can be trained (see Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2001, p. 307) or whether “social-perceptual traits are obvious candidates for training purposes” (Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2013, p. 936). More theoretical work is also necessary to clarify the MPQ’s underlying multicultural personality model.

Empirically, however, the MPQ has garnered much support for its reliability, construct validity and predictive validity across diverse samples from different cultures (Leung et al., 2014, pp. 493-494; Matsumoto & Hwang, 2013, pp. 862-863; Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2013, p. 930-931). The authors frequently highlight the instrument’s incremental validity, i.e. superior predictive validity, vis-à-vis the Big Five personality traits, possibly reflecting “that the MPQ dimensions represent a set of traits not so broad as to lose [sic] any capability for specific prediction, and not so narrow as to fail to achieve a satisfactory account of complex criteria” (Leone, Van der Zee, Van Oudenhoven, Perugini & Ercolani, 2005, p. 1459). The MPQ currently exists in long (91-items) and short (40-items) self-report versions (Van der Zee, Van Oudenhoven, Ponterotto & Fietzer, 2013) although it has also been used for ratings by significant others (see Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2001).

II.b.vi. Relevance for UCP

Although the review above includes a diverse range of approaches to intercultural competence, Matsumoto and Hwang (2013) noticed a “conceptual overlap among the

constructs assessed by [CQ, ICAPS and MPQ], which suggests four major domains of [intercultural competence]” (p. 868). As listed in Table 2, these four major domains could possibly be labeled social proactivity, flexibility, metacognition and emotion regulation,

Domain	CQ	ICAPS	MPQ
1	Motivation	Openness	Open-mindedness; social initiative
2	Behavior	Openness	Open-mindedness; flexibility
3	Metacognition	Creativity	Cultural empathy
4	–	Emotion regulation	Emotional stability

Table 2. Common domains of intercultural competence observed in three of the four conceptualizations reviewed in the present study (adapted from Matsumoto & Hwang, 2013, p. 868).

Furthermore, the four psychological models discussed in this chapter provide a solid foundation for assessing the few conceptions found in UCP literature. Firstly, the distinction between understanding of the local culture and translating “that understanding into a relationship on the ground with the local population” made by Howard and Levine (2001, p. 243) roughly conforms to the distinction between cognitive CQ and behavioral CQ. Then again, Howard & Levine (2001) suggest that individual attitudes such as open-mindedness and “a genuine interest and concern” can compensate for a lack of understanding (p. 243), yet none of these really feature in the CQ model. The MPQ as a personality model admittedly omits knowledge or understanding of different cultures but with open-mindedness, flexibility and cultural empathy, it approximates Howard and Levine’s (2001) individual attitudes better than the other models. It is also worth recalling here that general attitudes are less predictive of behavior than attitudes about particular behaviors (Ajzen & Fishbein’s, 2005, pp. 193-195). In this sense, telling UCPs to be open-minded and show genuine interest is well-intended but may not amount to much on the ground without more specificity.

NP and UNITAR’s list of “specific intercultural skills” (United Nations Institute for Training and Research, 2017, pp. 176-177) is highly valuable in this respect since the skills are essentially ways of thinking and behaving on the ground, regardless of the prior understanding. Many of them could be grouped under CQ’s metacognitive factor, including ‘increasing tolerance for ambiguity,’ ‘recognizing multiple perspectives,’ and ‘developing multiple interpretations.’ Simultaneously, these examples probably correlate with the MPQ’s

open-mindedness and cultural empathy dimensions, as do ‘suspending assumptions and value judgments’ and ‘practicing cultural humility.’ As the MPQ is a personality model, however, it remains unclear to what extent those skills could be trained in prospective UCPs. Therefore, the skill-based ICAPS and its openness and creativity dimensions might conform better to the UNITAR skills. Interestingly, although UNITAR does not deal with worldviews, the skills they describe reflect the DMIS’ concept of cognitive complexity supposedly well. ‘Perspective-taking’ is implied in all those skills referring to multiple interpretations, while being ‘person-centered’ is evident in ‘listening,’ ‘practicing cultural humility’ and ‘meeting people where they are.’

II.c. Research questions

In spite of the short assessment above, several issues remain unexplored. These include: to what extent UCPs on the ground take into account the above skills listed by NP and UNITAR, what constitutes intercultural competence in their own view, how it manifests in UCPs’ day to day work, and whether UCPs pursue other strategies to build positive relationships with locals. Therefore, the main research questions (RQs) of the present study are:

1. *How do UCPs build positive relationships with the locals on the ground?*
2. *What is the role of intercultural competence in the process of building positive relationships? In other words, how do UCPs translate intercultural competence into positive relationships?*

As the focus on relationships in the context of UCP is a rather recent development in academia, a deeper understanding of the possible pitfalls of relationships has not yet been offered. Thus, the third RQ is:

3. *What are the challenges for UCPs in building and maintaining positive relationships with the locals?*

The ensuing chapter introduces the broader methodology as well as the specific methods used to find answers to these questions.

III. METHODS

This chapter first describes and justifies the methodology chosen for the present study. It thereafter documents data collection and data analysis before discussing potential and actual limitations. The chapter concludes with a separate section devoted to a reflection on my own role in this research project.

III.a. Methodology

The present study employs a qualitative, grounded theory approach. Charmaz and Henwood (2008) note that grounded theory inherently “fosters viewing individual behaviour as embedded in situations and social contexts” (p. 241), which is precisely the theme of the present study. Moreover, grounded theory is ideally suited for finding answers mainly to explorative research questions specifically because

it helps to surface the tacit and taken-for-granted aspects of practical work by asking questions about what people are doing and trying to accomplish, how exactly they are going about the ‘doing’, and how people understand what is going on. (Nolas, 2011, pp. 39-40)

As has been argued in the previous chapter, there is little to no understanding of whether and how UCPs translate intercultural competence into positive relationships with culturally different others. Grounded theory enables them to tell their stories and, equally important, enables the researcher to make sense of their stories and develop slowly yet systematically “a theoretical narrative that has explanatory and predictive power” (Charmaz, 2001, p. 691; see Charmaz & Henwood, 2008, pp. 240-243). Although such interpretative work might be frowned upon by many in mainstream psychology, interpretation refers to “amplification of meaning, an exploration and clarification of the many strands of meaning which constitute the phenomenon of interest” (Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2008, p. 9) rather than fitting the data into the researcher’s preconceived ideas. Nevertheless, the last section in this chapter clarifies my very own preconceived ideas in order to provide more transparency.

Lastly, time and financial constraints precluded the possibility of fieldwork and focus groups. Instead, as the present study is not engaged in deductive hypothesis-testing but attempting to seek answers to rather explorative questions about how individuals operate in culturally different, high-stress social environments, interviews were deemed the method of choice. Not only does grounded theory hold excellent data collection and data analysis tools for interviews (see Charmaz & Henwood, 2008, p. 242, Payne, 2007, p. 72), but interviews themselves “are

useful for grounded theory studies that address individual experience” (Charmaz, 2001, p. 678). In particular, semi-structured interviews make it possible “to follow up interesting and important issues that come up during the interview” in real time (Smith & Eatough, 2007, p. 41), and hence allow for greater flexibility in exploring the research questions. Charmaz (2001, p. 676) even argues that the specific practicalities of qualitative, in-depth interviewing, i.e. the interviewer’s simultaneous flexibility and control, mirror the practicalities of grounded theory analysis. The subsequent section thus briefly describes how the interview data was collected.

III.b. Data collection

III.b.i. Interviewees and sampling strategy

Interviewees were recruited using snowball sampling, starting from a few pre-existing UCP contacts who reached out to ‘gatekeepers’ who in turn contacted UCPs or provided their contact information. In one instance, a contact sent an invitation to participation to a mailing list of UCPs. Often contacts referred to others potentially interested or at least offered to do so. All communication at this stage was conducted via e-mail. A total of 12 people were interviewed, comprising current and former UCPs and a few administrative staff of UCP organizations. Table 3 gives an overview of their backgrounds. Six interviewees were affiliated with the Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT), five with the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR)¹⁰ and one with PBI. Unfortunately, no interviewees from NP could be recruited despite multiple requests. In addition, several potential interviewees could not be arranged an interview within the designated data collection period.

Interviewee	Age	Origin	Experience in years	Duty station(s)
AMG	30-39	North America	-	-
BAM	30-39	Latin America	1.5	Colombia
EUB	30-39	Europe	2	Colombia
FEA	40-49	Latin America	9	Canada, Colombia, Palestine
FSS	30-39	North America	1.5	Colombia
GBJ	30-39	Middle East	2	Greece
HMG	20-29	North America	1.5	Colombia

¹⁰ This number includes those involved with the Fellowship of Reconciliation Peace Presence, which evolved out of FOR USA and became an independent organization in 2013/14.

KEA	30-39	North America	1.5	Colombia
MHP	20-29	Asia-Pacific	1	Palestine
OOB	50-59	Europe	1	Indonesia
RER	20-29	North America	1	Colombia
RJJ	30-39	Europe	5.5	Colombia, Guatemala

Table 3. Overview of the interviewees' backgrounds. Interviewees were given random aliases. Age refers to age at the time of the interview. Experience refers to years worked on the ground as a UCP.

III.b.ii. Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted online in early October 2017 using Skype Voice-over-IP software and for recording MP3 Skype Recorder software. Although interviewing via the internet faces general criticism for not capturing non-verbal cues and thus for inhibiting trust and rapport (Evans, Elford & Wiggins, 2008, p. 322), the communication with the interviewees was kept as friendly, professional, open and flexible as possible both prior and during the interviews (see Charmaz, 2001, pp. 691-692). Moreover, transcribing only verbal data is commonly deemed a sufficient basis for analysis in the grounded theory approach (Gibson & Hugh-Jones, 2007, pp. 142-143). Construction of the interview questions was informed by a number of sources on grounded theory, qualitative data collection and interviewing best practices (Charmaz, 2001; Evans et al., 2008, pp. 319-330; Hawker & Kerr, 2007; Hugh-Jones & Gibson, 2012, pp. 104-105; Mann & Stewart, 2001; Nolas, 2011, pp. 29-30; Smith & Eatough, 2007, pp. 42-45; Warren, 2001). The interview protocol can be found in Appendix 1.

III.b.iii. Ethics

All interviewees took part in the present study voluntarily, often despite time differences and poor internet connections. For instance, four of the interviewees responded to the impersonal mailing list invitation. Interviewees were briefed about the aims of the present study in the very first email they received, and were also given the opportunity to ask further questions, which some interviewees did. During e-mail correspondence and once more at the beginning of each interview, the interviewees were (i) informed about their rights to reject answering questions and to withdraw from the interviews, (ii) asked for their consent for audio recording the interview, (iii) assured confidentiality and anonymity of data and identity, and (iv) notified about the kind of personal information which would be collected (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2008; see Appendix 2). Since third parties such as their employers could use it to identify the interviewees, it was emphasized that the interviewees could withhold any personal

information. At the end of the interviews, interviewees were thanked and asked for their agreement to be contacted at a later point, myself making the same offer. A few interviewees asked to review and approve the extracts quoted from them before publication, which was complied with. Many expressed their interest in reading the published study and were promised a copy. Moreover, the interview recordings, transcripts and other electronic files directly associated with the interviewees were encrypted using VeraCrypt encryption software to prevent data theft and identification of the interviewees by third parties.

III.c. Data analysis

Although stipulated by grounded theory scholars (see e.g. Charmaz & Henwood, 2008, p. 2; Payne, 2007, pp. 73-74), data from the interviews could not be analyzed as soon as it was collected to inform further data collection due to the time constraints of present study. As such, the research process was not “cyclical” (Gibson & Hugh Jones, 2012, p. 133) but linear and in this sense more akin to mainstream, positivist psychological studies. The overall data analysis process is depicted in Table 4 and described in more detail below. In order to inform readers unfamiliar with grounded theory, general explications of each method are given before describing their use in the present study.

Step	Details	
Transcription	Full transcriptions of the discussions between interviewer and interviewees.	
Immersion in data	Reading and re-reading.	
Open coding	Identifying and labelling meaningful units of text which might be a word, phrase, sentence or larger section of text.	Memo writing Noting all thoughts and ideas that come to mind during the research process, about the data in particular.
Selective coding	Sorting and scrutinizing of the open codes in order to uncover tentative higher-level categories and their relations to each other.	
Theoretical integration	Consulting relevant literature and linking with existing theories.	

Table 4. Overview of the data analysis process of the present study (adapted from Bartlett and Payne, 1997, as cited in Payne, 2007, pp. 78-79, and Hawker & Kerr, 2007, p. 88).

III.c.i. Transcription

In accordance with established practice “in grounded theory analysis, [...] both the speech of the researcher and the participant but not [...] prosodic, paralinguistic or extralinguistic elements” (Payne, 2007, pp. 75-76) were transcribed in a playscript/ orthographic manner since it was of particular interest “what words were spoken, rather than how” (Gibson & Hugh-Jones, 2012, pp. 142). Transcribing was expedited with the aid of Dragon NaturallySpeaking 11.5 speech recognition software. Since the software is speaker-dependent, transcribing was done via parroting, i.e. listening to the recording through headphones and repeating the recorded speech into a microphone as heard. The software then automatically transcribed the parroted speech.

After all the interviews had been transcribed, they were entered into NVivo 11 Pro qualitative data analysis software, which contains a wide range of useful tools for data analysis. These include quick and flexible coding, memo writing, manifold hyperlinking possibilities, visualizations, and a comprehensive search function (see Bringer, Johnston & Brackenridge, 2006). Although some argue that using software for grounded theory analysis inherently inhibits creativity (Holton, 2007, p. 287), NVivo nonetheless “allows for numerous active links, for example, from one memo to the next, or one category to a memo, or from the model to an original quote” (Bringer, Johnston, & Brackenridge, 2004, p. 254), thus greatly improving the likelihood of finding meaningful connections, relations and similarities. Ultimately, using such tailored software increases transparency and is simply more efficient than an analysis with stacks of hand-written paper notes (see Bringer et al., 2004, p. 254).

III.c.ii. Open coding

After each interview transcript had been carefully read once, open coding was undertaken which refers to “identifying and labelling meaningful units of text which might be a word, phrase, sentence or larger section of text” (Payne, 2007, p. 78) in order to “continue systematically the process of ‘noticing’” information related to the research questions (Hawker & Kerr, 2007, p. 90). According to Charmaz (2001), open coding should preferably be conducted line-by-line, “[using] active terms to define what is happening in the data” (p. 684). It was also attempted to find a balance between taking up the interviewees’ own expressions and more abstract codes (see Hawker & Kerr, 2007, p. 91; Payne, 2007, p. 79). To arrive at the latter type, Holton (2007), a follower of the classic strand of grounded theory, suggests asking the following questions at this stage:

‘What is this data a study of?’, ‘What category does this incident indicate?’, ‘What is actually happening in the data?’, ‘What is the main concern being faced by the participants?’, and ‘What accounts for the continual resolving of this concern?’. (p. 275)

Ideally, the resulting codes are “a form of shorthand that distills events and meanings without losing their essential properties” (Charmaz, 2001, p. 684). Definitions of some codes were saved in the code’s properties in NVivo¹¹ where necessary to increase consistency (Hawker & Kerr, 2007, p. 91). The software also supports flexibility and openness, i.e. coding “the data in every way possible” (Holton, 2007, p. 275) through its ‘coding stripes’ function (see Bringer et al., 2006, pp. 255-256). An example is shown in Figure 5.

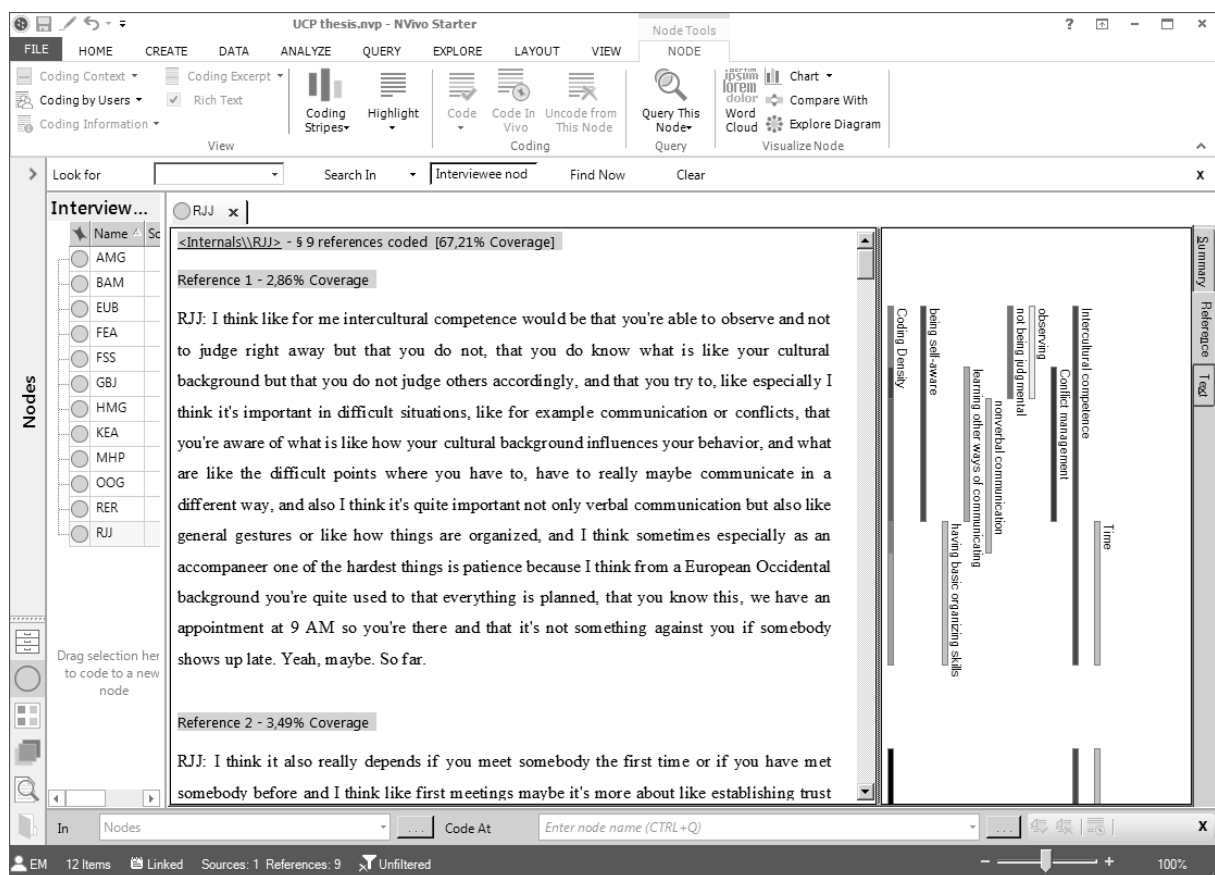


Figure 5. Example of open coding in NVivo, using the coding stripes function. Data drawn from the present study.

Prior to open coding, 13 broad categories were created based on the most recurring themes as judged by the close reading. These “common sense categories” (Kelle, 2007, pp. 209-210) obviously included intercultural competence, relationships with locals, relationships within teams, but also sexism, embedded learning, conflict management, and establishing common

¹¹ In NVivo, codes and higher-level categories are all called “nodes,” which can be complemented by descriptions and memos.

ground. At the end of the open coding phase, 378 open codes referring to individual text elements had been created and used to capture meaningful information in the interviews alongside the 13 categories.

III.c.iii. Selective coding

Subsequently, these open codes were subjected to selective coding.¹² Here, “the researcher uses the most frequently appearing initial codes to sort, synthesize, and conceptualize large amounts of data” (Charmaz, 2001, p.684) to arrive at a deeper and more analytical understanding, i.e. at “tentative categories to [further] explore and analyse” (Charmaz & Henwood, 2008, p. 242). Two things are usually required of the researcher during this step: remaining as open to as many connections and explanations as possible, and constantly comparing data, codes, and emerging categories (see Charmaz & Henwood, 2008, p. 242). Consequently, “at this stage, the categories are arbitrary and the open codes can be grouped into more than one category [...] codes and categories will change and adapt throughout the analysis as ideas and linkages emerge” (Hawker & Kerr, 2007, pp. 93-94). Through constant comparison, it is attempted “to raise the conceptual level” (Holton, 2007, p. 272, see also p. 273) from description to explanation¹³ without falling prey to “the inclination to focus on positive evidence as confirmatory” (Dey, 2007, p. 179) all too hastily.

While selective coding can benefit from designing and working with visualizations (Dey, 2007, pp. 179-181), none of the cluster analyses offered by NVivo could advance the present study significantly. All cluster analysis results were far more likely to group codes from one and the same interviewee together than those codes related in content.¹⁴ Thus, a manual selective coding process was conducted akin to Bringer et al. (2006, p. 257), who visually displayed their open codes and clustered them together via drag-and-drop, utilizing NVivo’s concept mapping tool (see Figure 6). The software allows for quick and instant investigation of individual codes through built-in hyperlinks, i.e. retrieving which text they had been coded at, and examination of their relations to other codes through the coding stripes, enabling the researcher to “oscillate between being close to the data and gaining distance for analytical

¹² There is some disagreement in the literature regarding the naming of this step. Sometimes it is referred to as focused coding, sometimes as axial coding, sometimes selective coding denotes a step further up the conceptual ladder, sometimes this task falls to axial coding. I chose to follow Charmaz’ (2001) wording as it seemed the most appropriate given the constraints of the present study.

¹³ It should be noted that Holton (2007) has yet another different understanding of selective coding (see pp. 280-281) as she adheres to the classic strand of grounded theory.

¹⁴ Presumably, the correlation coefficients and clustering options were too sensitive to similarities in the text, exposing a fault in the open coding process, which was conducted more sentence-to-sentence or even paragraph-wise than line-by-line. Therefore two open codes could overlap partially or completely in their textual data.

purposes” (Bringer et al. 2006, p. 257). These functions simultaneously serve the goal of constant comparison, and indeed of selective coding in general, namely revealing “possible sets of subcategories of a given category, and relations to other categories” (Kelle, 2007, p. 196). The total number of open codes was 356 eventually, as some codes were dropped for redundancy reasons. 6 open codes could not be assigned to any of the emerging categories. This is entirely unproblematic in grounded theory because codes are not regarded as final (Dey, 2007, p. 183). Furthermore, since these 6 codes were “theoretical categories with limited empirical content [used] as heuristic devices” (Kelle, 2007, p. 207) such as ‘space,’ ‘love,’ ‘learning’ or ‘trust,’ their exclusion should not negatively impact on the overall results. After all, most text data was coded using several codes, largely more concrete and process-oriented ones.

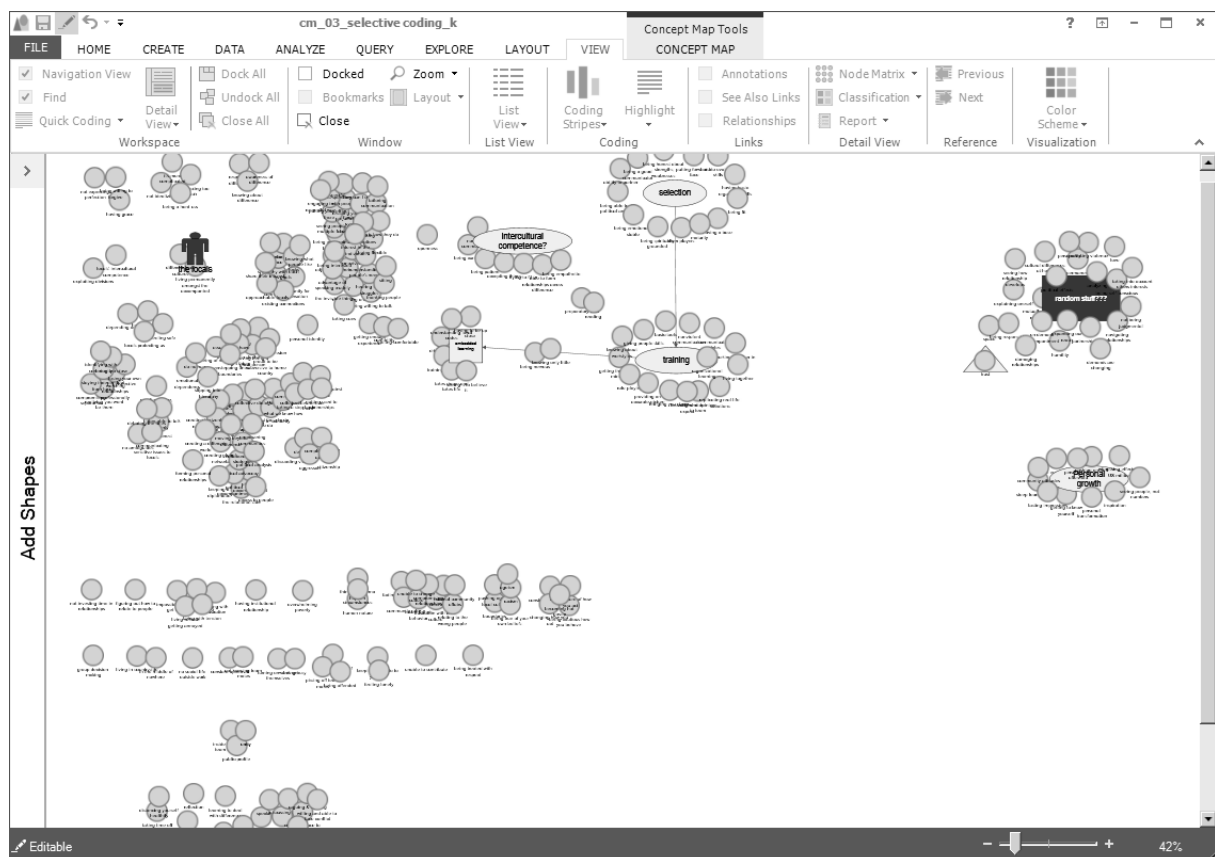


Figure 6. Example of selective coding in NVivo, using the concept map function. Each light-colored circle refers to one open code. Data drawn from the present study.

III.c.iv. Memo writing

Memo writing refers to “a way of capturing ideas, interpretations, hunches or analytical responses” (Nolas, 2011, p. 33) on paper or digitally, for example as text or sketches. They are essentially an “account of a researcher talking to him/herself” (Lempert, 2007, p. 249). Constantly writing memos serves various purposes such as (i) preventing imposition of ideas

onto the data by putting them down on paper instead (Nolas, 2011, p. 33), (ii) deliberate pausing and reflecting in the midst of coding (Holton, 2007, pp. 275-276), or (iii) increasing transparency and accountability by virtue of being an audit trail justifying decisions taken during data analysis (Payne, 2007, p. 81). Most importantly, memos should “raise the analytic level of the emerging theory, identify tentative categories and their properties, define gaps in data collection, and delineate relationships between categories” (Charmaz & Henwood, 2008, p. 242) and thus assist taking the necessary steps from data to theory (see Holton, 2007, pp. 265-266, pp. 281-282). Eventually, memos are to answer the following questions about the data: “What is this an example of? When does it happen? Where is it happening? With whom? How? Under what conditions does it seem to occur? With what consequences?” (Lempert 2007, p. 251).

As such, memos are written from the beginning to the end of the research process and especially during coding. The first memo of the present study was recorded during the transcription phase. During the open coding and selective coding phases, 20 and 14 memos had been saved in NVivo, respectively, ranging from a few key words with question marks to whole paragraphs and sketches. 3 additional memos were written while drafting this thesis. In order to maintain an overview, memos were loosely grouped according to different functions (see Bringer et al., 2006, pp. 252-253; QSR International, 2017, p. 38), as shown in Table 5.

Type	Number	Purpose	Prefix
Analytical	24	Capture findings, ideas and thoughts; document the methodological steps taken; discuss visualizations and other automated data analysis results.	Ana
Interview	1	Summarize the key points of an interview, including contradictions, surprises or early hunches.	Int
Node	3	Explain or comment on an open code or category.	Node
NVivo	4	Record insights into or ideas about the software.	Nvivo
Project	4	Document goals, assumptions and key decisions.	Proj
Theory	1	Capture evolving theory at a more abstract level; summarize thoughts (Bringer et al., 2006, p. 253)	Theo

Table 5. Number and types of memos written during the present study (adapted from QSR International, 2017, p. 38, unless stated otherwise).

III.d. Limitations

III.d.i. Theoretical sampling and saturation

As data collection and data analysis progress, grounded theory stipulates that the sampling strategy changes depending on the emerging analytical categories. This so-called “theoretical sampling is a strategy to advance theory construction, not to achieve any approximation of population representativeness” (Charmaz & Henwood, 2008, p. 243). In particular, it is undertaken to explore gaps and anomalies and elaborate on the categories and their relations to each other (Charmaz & Henwood, 2008, p. 243; Nolas, 2011, p. 28). Usually, ‘negative cases’ form the centerpiece of theoretical sampling: reminding one of Karl Popper’s demand for falsifiability (see Kantowitz, Roediger III & Elmes, 2009, pp. 10-11), the researcher deliberately attempts to collect data which contradict or “do not fit the theory” under development in order to test and refine it (Nolas, 2011, p. 28; Payne, 2007, p. 74). Ideally, theoretical sampling eventually leads to theoretical saturation, a moment in the research process after which any additional data hardly contribute to further developing the emerging theory, and thus data collection can be halted (Charmaz & Henwood, 2008, p. 243; Payne, 2007, p. 79).

Given the time and space constraints of a Master’s thesis, the present study was not able to engage in theoretical sampling and achieve theoretical saturation but had to accept “premature closure” at $N = 12$. Instead, the questionnaire was expanded by a few questions as the data collection proceeded in order to clarify themes which emerged in the first few interviews or to identify contradictions (Charmaz, 2001, pp. 675-676; see “Other topics” in Appendix 1). Another crucial aspect during this process is usually the sorting and integration of all memos written since they supposedly contain all the theoretically relevant deliberations (Charmaz, 2001, p. 690; Lempert, 2007, p. 258). Yet in light of the elusiveness of theoretical saturation for the present study, sorting and integrating a total of merely 38 memos appeared superfluous.

Nonetheless, the lack of theoretical sampling and saturation has serious repercussions for the validity of the findings as the data analysis may remain descriptive rather than leading to deeper understanding and theory development (see Charmaz & Henwood, 2008, p. 243, p. 246). Therefore, the present study faced the immanent risk that the “view may remain partial and superficial [...] [the researchers] reproduce commonsense [*sic*] understandings of the phenomenon” (Charmaz & Henwood, 2008, p. 245) instead of producing an in-depth understanding through exhaustive analysis of diverse data. Moreover, the bias toward

Colombia as the duty station of most interviewees evidently had an impact on the results, despite representativeness not being compulsory in grounded theory studies. For instance, issues of living permanently “up the mountain” “in the middle of nowhere” “in the midst the accompanied” people, which might have been of lesser importance in more urban settings such as Israel-Palestine or Greece, were brought to the forefront repeatedly in the present study. It has also been argued that in the absence of theoretical sampling and saturation, “organizational schema, taxonomies and typologies may represent alternative, perhaps more achievable, goals for smaller scale grounded theory studies than the development of an explanatory theory” (Charmaz & Henwood, 2008, p. 20). However, since the interviewees came from several different organizations, this was no solution for the present study. The problem of saturation consequently remained a serious one. If anything, the present study may function as a foundation and stimulus for further research into the emerging categories reported in the next chapter.

III.d.ii. Interviews and interview data

Although Payne (2007) maintains that “interviews are a suitable method of collecting elicited data for grounded theory” (p. 72), she also stresses the epistemological claims usually made by grounded theorists with regard to interviews, namely that the interviewees’ replies accurately mirror their ‘true’ thinking and feeling, believed to be stable over time (p. 75). Others also stressed the unstable nature of interviewee’s replies, regarding them mainly as imperfect reconstructions dependent on the specific context of the interview (see e.g. Furnari, 2014, p. 13). With regard to UCP, there is likely truth in both these positions. On the one hand, some processes and situations reported by the interviewees were certainly valid 20 years ago and will certainly be valid in 20 years’ time, such as that awareness of cultural difference helps building relationships or that deterrence is a major element of UCP. On the other hand, UCP is in flux in the sense that existing missions are phased out and new ones established in entirely different contexts, calling previous experience and certainties into question. A case in point is GBJ who witnessed the following in senior colleagues arriving at a newly established duty station:

(Extract 1, GBJ): It's very complex and it's why many [colleagues] get traumatized when they come there and they can't handle it because it takes them a bit of time until they get

used to the way of partnership that we have [there], that there are many not so outspoken partnerships and there are also some other outspoken partnerships.¹⁵

Aside from this, Evans et al. (2008) debate whether “the interviewer can manage to effectively build rapport and trust” (p. 322) in an online interview without face-to-face, let alone ‘body-to-body’ nonverbal interaction. Their concern, however, lies mainly with textual interviews, i.e. via email or chats, and they do not address online Voice-over-IP conversations (see Evans et al., 2008, pp. 322-324). Most interviewees in the present study expressed either pleasure in or gratitude for talking about relationships and intercultural competence in their work, presumably a post hoc indication of rapport. Furthermore, as the following exchange indicates, inequality in hierarchy between interviewer and interviewee was a minor issue:

(Extract 2, HMG): I mean not that your words aren't important but considering that you're asking me for mine, I'll consider mine to be slightly more important [laughs]

And although “a naive researcher may inadvertently force interview data into preconceived categories [by] asking the wrong questions” (Charmaz, 2001, p. 681) or asking them in the wrong way, on occasion some interviews for the present study took a generally interesting, yet ultimately not all too relevant course. In that sense, the interviewees had ample freedom to elaborate on topics, ideas and events which were genuinely significant to them.

III.d.iii. Literature review

It is common practice for researchers using grounded theory to review existent literature only once data analysis is completed in order “to enhance their naivety and their sensitivity to the issues emerging from the data” (Payne, 2007, p. 71). The literature review is thus more of a reference point for comparisons of the ‘results’ than the background of and justification for a given study (see e.g. Charmaz & Henwood, 2008, p. 243). In a sense, this merely follows from the somewhat mantra-like “basic premise of the classic methodology; that being, the theory *emerges* from the data not from extant theory” (Holton, 2007, pp. 271-272; emphasis added). Yet there is also some discontent over this radical demand as it presents researchers with quite a challenge: what if she postpones the literature review only to discover that her study is irrelevant to current scientific debates in her field (Kelle, 2007, p. 192) or, worse, that it has already been conducted by others (Payne, 2007, p. 71)? It seems, then, that a balanced position is the reasonable option: “Ultimately, it is a balance between reading enough to be

¹⁵ All interviewee extracts in this thesis were edited for clarity and grammar a posteriori. In most cases, this meant deleting repetitions of words or deleting discourse particles such as “kind of,” “you know,” or “like.”

aware of and understand possible factors that could influence the area of study while still remaining open-minded to what the participants have to say” (Bringer et al., 2006, p. 250).

The present study is in line with this balanced position. The introduction, most of the UCP section was written before the data collection phase. In addition, I had some prior knowledge of the DMIS and, to a lesser extent, CQ and MPQ but did not commit that knowledge to paper until after data analysis. Finally, the subsections on intercultural competence in UCP as well as the paragraphs preceding it (dealing with how to build or jeopardize positive relationships), the discussion of definitions of culture, and the review of the ICAPS were entirely researched and written after data analysis.

III.e. Own positioning

In contrast to mainstream positivist psychology, the Straussian and constructivist strands of grounded theory (see Charmaz, 2001, pp. 677-678; Nolas, 2011, p. 20), to which I tend to subscribe, expect the researcher to position herself with regard to the research at hand and to reflect upon her own influence on the research process.¹⁶

To begin with, this study was developed out of my own interest in UCP as an essentially nonviolent endeavor to bring about peace or at least prevent the deaths of innocent civilians. This interest itself grew out of my reading of Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan’s (2011) seminal quantitative research on resistance movements against governments, finding that nonviolent movements are much more likely to be successful. Simultaneously, I studied Gene Sharp’s (1973) early theorizations about the significance of popular consent in any kind of governmental system and how nonviolent resistance can better serve to withdraw consent and bring about positive change than violence. At the very core of this lies my desire and drive to understand how ordinary people can push their political and socioeconomic elites to realize human security, i.e. “freedom from fear, freedom from want and freedom to live in dignity” (United Nations General Assembly, 2010, para. 4), in their societies. Since I had also been considering applying for UCP positions in the future, I was of course even more curious to explore this topic.

Furthermore, my own biographical experience as a globetrotter in the past five years led me to take a closer look at intercultural competence, both in order to enhance that of my own on the one hand, and to explore another possible future career path on the other. Notably, before beginning the present study I had my own rather messy understanding of how I translate

¹⁶ As a matter of fact, I wrote this section before collecting the data.

intercultural competence into positive relationships across cultures, loosely entailing ideas of respect, humility, being slow to judge, high external self-awareness and curiosity.

Finally, it needs to be acknowledged that this study functioned as a fallback option for my Master thesis writing. Having been trained in hypothetico-deductive mainstream psychology in my Bachelor's, I had originally devised a positivist, quantitative survey design to investigate the intercultural competence of Finnish peace educators compared to "regular" teachers. However, since it proved impossible to obtain a sufficient number of survey participants, I had to abandon these plans. As such, my familiarity, let alone expertise with grounded theory before the present study was limited at best. Although I have been very enthusiastic about 'learning' and trying to apply grounded theory, it is possible that I have made vital mistakes during the research process, which calls for further prudence on the part of the reader.¹⁷

As noted above, my engagement with the previous thesis idea led to my reading of some literature on intercultural competence, in particular on the DMIS, about half a year before the present study began to take shape. Thus, I had already possessed a degree of theoretical knowledge of intercultural competence that might have impacted my data analysis.

¹⁷ An anecdote can serve to illustrate the steep learning curve: As a non-native speaker of English, it took me several days and (unsuccessful) online searches to grasp what was meant by 'memos:' contrary to my expectations of something highly technical and sophisticated, it was simply short informal notes of one's thoughts and ideas.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the research questions will be addressed successively, with each tentative category first explained and exemplified by several excerpts from the data before relating it to the overall findings and relevant literature (see Riley, 2012, pp. 184-185; Wuest, 2006, cited in Stern, 2007, p. 122). As the ‘results’ obtained are likely to be as influenced by the researcher as their discussion – and therefore no bold claim to objective and replicable data can be attempted – the present study deviates from conventional psychological reporting practice and simultaneously presents the ‘results’ and their discussion.¹⁸

To begin with, Figure 7 and Figure 8 illustrate the simplified conceptual framework, including the tentative categories identified in the interviews and their relations to each other. (See Appendix 3 for the original NVivo concept map developed during selective coding).

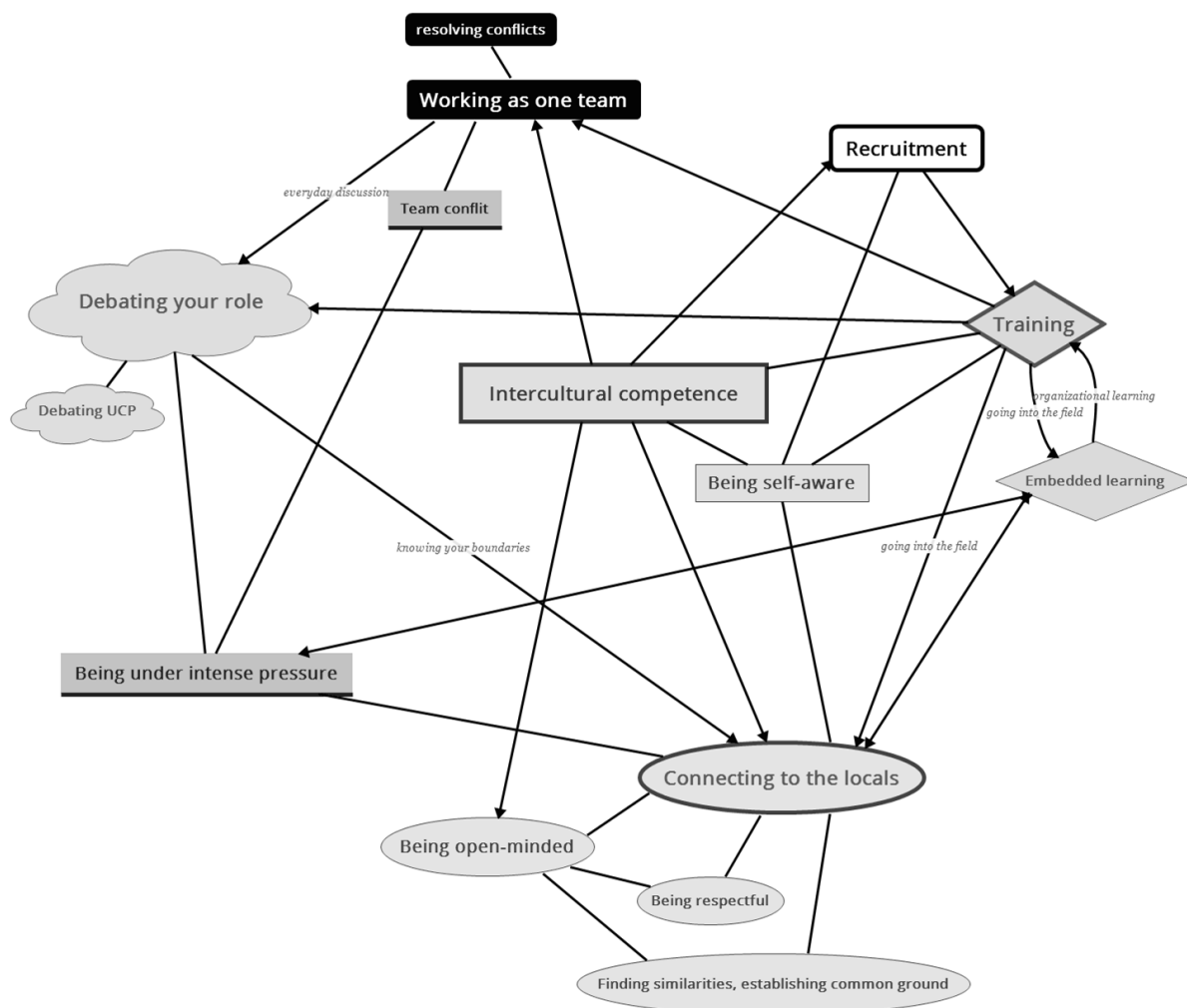


Figure 7. The conceptual framework (simplified) developed during data analysis. Nodes similar in design denote a thematic cluster, with bigger nodes or those with thicker borders being parent nodes.

¹⁸ In fact, a draft version of this thesis had seen a separation between the results and discussion chapters.

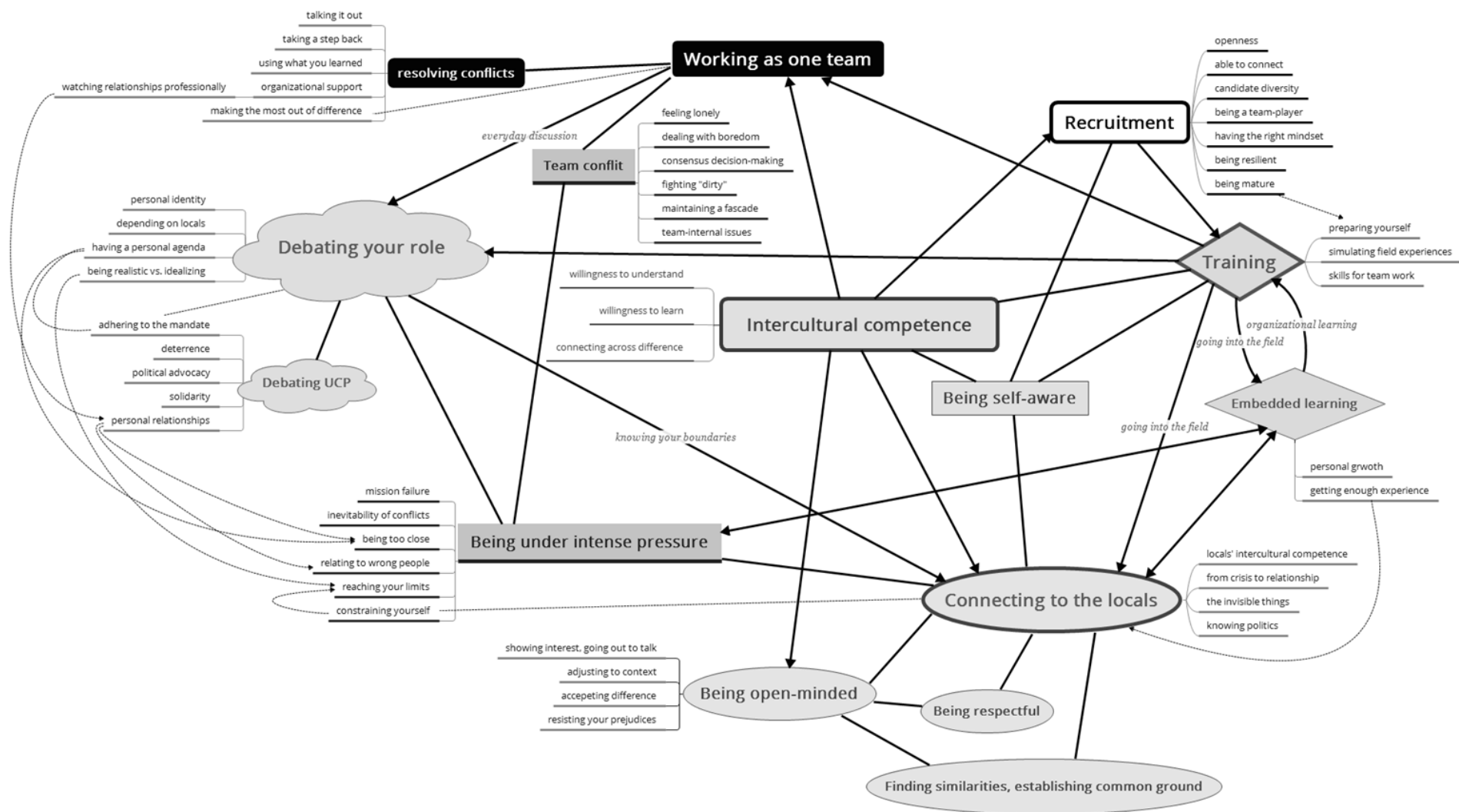


Figure 8. The conceptual framework (full) developed during data analysis. Nodes similar in design denote a thematic cluster, with bigger nodes or those with thicker borders being parent nodes. (See Appendix 3 for the original NVivo concept map developed during selective coding.)

IV.a. RQ1: Building positive relationships

Howard and Levine (2001, p 243) claim that “the most important relationship in the field is that with the local population.” The interviewees in the present study supported this assessment to a considerable extent:

(Extract 3, AMG): So I think those day-to-day, one-on-one personal relationships really are what drives [UCPs] to do their best work because it's not some abstract thing that you're getting involved in, it's very personal but I also think that it also helps us regulate the type of work that we're doing.

(Extract 4, RER): Being able to talk openly about what's going on here is really important and their experiences and their priorities are really important for our own analysis and to really be in solidarity, I think.

AMG believes that positive relationships with the locals are a source of motivation, pushing UCPs to commit themselves to the common good. In contrast, RER illustrates the instrumental nature of relationships in terms of obtaining valuable information and opinions for analysis. Although each interviewee had their own strategies and ideas about building positive relationships with locals, common themes did emerge. The most widely reported one was to find similarities between oneself and the locals and to establish common ground from which relationship-building can evolve. Closely related to this, but nonetheless distinct, was the imperative to be open-minded, a higher order concept which subsumes a range of behaviors: (a) striving to talk to people and showing genuine interest in them, (b) adjusting to the specific local context, (c) accepting differences, and (d) resisting one's prejudices. Being respectful was another behavior mentioned several times, yet deemed separate from the other categories. In the following, each category will be described in greater detail.

IV.a.i. Finding similarities, establishing common ground

In the ‘finding similarities and establishing common ground’ category, interviewees reported how possessing certain skills (dancing), characteristics (dark hair) or knowledge (politics) valued by the locals enabled them to connect easier:

(Extract 5, HMG): Physical competence, kinesthetic intelligence is very important to people in Colombia, so [...] if people were able to play soccer well or if they were able to build things or saddle up their own horse or ride really well, that's impressive to people and they want to engage.

HMG notes that having particular motor skills in this specific community in Colombia can spark the locals' interest and lead to first interactions without any great effort on the part of

the UCP. Lest this be pure guesswork, the interviewees strongly underlined the necessity to actively seek information about what the locals like, appreciate and engage in themselves:

(Extract 6, FEA): When I know I'm going to meet a person [for the first time], I'm first thinking about what similarities I will have with that person.

(Extract 7, BAM): I think it's important to know what people here in Colombia like. Things that make them happy, like soccer, it's a big deal here. And you can talk about soccer with kids and with old people, with women, with men... everyone loves soccer!

(Extract 8, HMG): But the biggest way to up your cultural competence is to find out what the things are that can show people that you're comfortable and trustworthy and do those things.

Interestingly, this strategy appears to be largely ignored by scholars of impression management (see e.g. DuBrin, 2011). Identifying what could make an impression requires additional preparation from the UCPs and their willingness to learn about topics they otherwise would never consider worth their time:

(Extract 9, BAM): And then we would be talking about soccer [...] And so this is how I would start my conversations with people even though I'm not a big fan of soccer

(Extract 10, HMG): And also if you're not interested in livestock, become interested in livestock because that's what everybody's thinking about, everybody's thinking about livestock and crops, [so] brush up on your agriculture!

Ultimately, it is evident that adequate preparation or, at the very least, some sort of flexibility and willingness to 'do as the Romans do' is required of UCPs to establish common ground. Moreover, "brushing up your knowledge" is of little use if not used in the field. For instance, knowing about animal husbandry without the readiness to live and work in the midst of chicken is unlikely to make a positive impression, which reminds of Howard and Levine's (2001, p. 243) insistence that understanding needs to be parlayed into relationships. Only genuinely sharing and living the locals' interests translates into common ground. This necessitates approaching the locals with an open mind.

IV.a.ii. Being open-minded

The metaphor of an open mind integrates several related but dissimilar categories of how to build positive relationships with locals.

Showing interest

Interest in the locals' lives should extend from the deployment preparations at least to the first few months of deployment. Strategies for expressing interest were very straightforward and relate to what Furnari (2014) called "being out and about" (p. 226): simply 'going outside,' observing, showing one's face, starting to talk, sitting down with locals and having drinks together. Most importantly, it involves a great amount of asking questions and attentively listening for the answers, as UNITAR recommends (United Nations Institute for Training and Research, 2017, p. 176):

(Extract 11, FEA): A lot of building positive relationships happens with a cup of coffee, it's very important to adjust to their cultural ways to build relationships, so it's many times three cups of tea [...] or going to spend the time with them at the community, in some cases we will visit the communities. Hear their narratives, hearing their struggles, hearing, a lot of attentive listening to them till they have enough trust in us to engage us in the work.

(Extract 12, RJJ): I think [in the] first meetings it's more about establishing trust so that you talk about issues that might be really daily issues, like how is his family, how is work, how is the harvest, so you try to show your interest in his background and his life at the moment and then slightly after sometime ask the questions you're really interested [in].

Whether it is about politics or about private life, FEA and RJJ reveal an understanding of trust as a function of interest expressed over a longer period of time. This complements views on the importance of spending time in the community expressed by Furnari's (2014, p. 253) peacekeepers. Moreover, listening is both a strategy to build positive relationships and an operational imperative to ensure that the local community's needs are properly understood:

(Extract 13, AMG): Because our work is set up as a partnership by invitation of the local community and if we're not listening to what they want and if we're not partnering in the work that they're doing in a way that's helpful to them, then we shouldn't be there.

(Extract 14, FEA): When we as project or the volunteers perceive that the context is changing, we go again to the partners and ask for... first their analysis of the context [...] and we ask them based on what is happening now: "What do you want us to do? How do you see we can support you in the struggle?"

Here, AMG and FEA point to larger questions surrounding the meaning, objectives and techniques of UCP, indicating that UCP does not provide uniform, one-size-fits-all solutions.

Rather, it requires constant reflection and adjustment. This is evident on the ground, too, as described in what follows.

Adjusting to the context

Several interviewees noted that UCPs new to the field should make an effort to adjust to the life, work and communication styles of the communities in which they are deployed. Moreover, what helped them well in connecting to one community (e.g. kinesthetic intelligence, extract 5) might not be what is needed with a different community, let alone different country. This strongly relates to what UNITAR called ‘meeting people where they are’ (United Nations Institute for Training and Research, 2017, p. 177). Most basically, this can require overcoming one’s disliking of coffee as implied in extract 9 above but it can also mean understanding the local sensitivities and behaving accordingly:

(Extract 15, EUB): In a different context going to a bar and playing pool for example might be totally innocuous and harmless but it just happens to be that in that area pool bars are known to be frequented by people that we wouldn't want to be seen with. So cultural sensitivity has to exist but it has to be attuned to the very local dynamics and that reflects the fact that the conflict has been localized.

(Extract 16, AMG): I would say it’s something along the lines of resourcing yourself as best you can to try to fit into a hosting community in the way that’s least disruptive.

EUB and AMG highlight that intercultural competence manifests itself differently in different contexts and that therefore a certain degree of sensitivity to the more latent cues is required from the UCP to avoid difficulties. This is in line with Mahony’s (2006, p. 76) observation that violating local codes of conduct has dire consequences for the relationships with locals. Additionally, flexibility in approaching and communicating locals is indispensable:

(Extract 17, MHP): It depends on who I'm meeting, so if I'm meeting a female, I'm quite relaxed and I find it very easy to just have a conversation and connect with them. And if it's children as well, it's very fun, I enjoy meeting new children and young teenagers. When it's men around my age, we have to have limited communication culturally, so unless they're part of a partner organization, I have to be very careful with how much communication we have

(Extract 18, RJJ): Sometimes I think it's maybe not only about culture because there is also a different culture for example in meeting with somebody from the capital or meeting with a peasant, with a farmer from a very rural community. Sometimes I think

[...] maybe there is not much difference on intercultural terms between me and somebody from the capital

While MHP emphasizes the gendered dimension of adjusting to the context to build relationships, RJJ questions the use of nationality as a proxy for culture, given that one might find not only “the Other” but also peers abroad.

Accepting difference

To adjust to a given context without much friction and to eventually build positive relationships, UCPs should accept the differences between their own ingrained ways of doing and those of the locals.

(Extract 19, BAM): Knowing that we’re different and also knowing that you gonna have to respect that and sometimes it’s gonna be hard, sometimes it’s gonna be fun, and that sometimes you’re gonna be fascinated and sometimes it’s gonna be really annoying, and then just learning how to navigate between the differences.

While the terms ‘accepting,’ ‘knowing about’ and ‘being aware of’ difference suggest neutral feelings, BAM also depicts the emotional roller coaster which a UCP will unavoidably experience. In this regard, respect, patience, forgiveness and humor become vital:

(Extract 20, KEA): This idea of giving people the benefit of the doubt and being willing to forgive, and that really comes into play with cross-cultural relationships, people are gonna make mistakes, that’s inevitable.

(Extract 21, FSS): Having a sense of humor when a trip you’ve planned doesn’t work out, when you have a logistical challenge, or when you make a mistake within the team [...] I think having humility in those moments and humor is so important and is key to creating different types of relationships.

Resisting one’s prejudices

Strongly pertaining to accepting difference, resisting one’s prejudices and resisting premature judgment constitute the fourth element of an open-minded UCP, reminding one of ‘suspending assumptions’ and ‘recognizing multiple perspectives’ (United Nations Institute for Training and Research, 2017, pp. 176-177). FSS believes that resisting prejudices is important not only on the ground but also throughout the organization and its operations:

(Extract 22, FSS): I think there is a basis of humility and just listening that’s required, especially at the beginning, [when you are] coming into a community and even as an organization as a whole as well as over the course of the time that we’re companions:

really listening to people, not being judgmental, trying to understand why they do what they do, and being an ally in that sense.

This reminds of AMG's postulation in extract 13. UCPs and organizations who arrive in a community with preconceived ideas and plans will supposedly fail in providing protection and alleviating the suffering of the local population. In this sense, RJJ illustrates how, despite best intentions, prejudices can be a slippery slope to victimization whereas an open-minded and unprejudiced attitude can be the first step to empowering the local population:

(Extract 23, RJJ): Maybe your personal expectations [are] "I want to know about the conflict, about the war" but these people, not only see them as victims [...] like "this is an indigenous woman so she is discriminated," but also maybe see her in her house cooking for her kids so in that moment she is not the victim of civil war but mainly just a mother [...] Try to be more multi-faceted so that you see the different identities of people.

Summarizing what constitutes an open mind is KEA:

(Extract 24, KEA): Another big thing is just patience and just being open-minded [...] and not making assumptions about yourself or about others, and just accepting things and being curious about them.

IV.a.iii. Being respectful

Although mentioned in the discussion of accepting difference, being respectful is considered a separate category from being open-minded because finding similarities and the categories in being-open minded appear to relate more to 'what to do' whereas being respectful appears to relate more to 'how to do it.' For instance, it is possible to show respect for others without being particularly interested in understanding their point of view or without resisting premature judgment.¹⁹ Likewise, it is possible to be interested but eventually react with contempt, which Mahony (2006, p. 76) has warned against. Hence, respect is essentially shown by treating another person as an equal, as a human worthy of the same treatment as one demands for oneself.

(Extract 25, GBJ): People come there and I have met many who are very considerate and respectful, they try [...] their best in order to understand and to give respect to people and to be equal human beings.

¹⁹ Although it can be argued that such behavior itself is a form of disrespect.

(Extract 26, FSS): [Regarding] intercultural competence, [...] speaking to mistakes, I definitely see moments where [UCPs] talk to our partners in a really condescending way.

To avoid talking condescendingly, one rather effortless advice is to show respect through gratitude since this can level the relationship:

(Extract 27, RJJ): And it's also about for example to thank a lot, thanking the people for their time, thank them for their trust, that you could be there so that they do not feel so much the power differences

To summarize, although the limited scope of the present study precludes any final judgments, ‘being open-minded’ could prove to be the core category of building positive relationships with locals in UCP, i.e. “the thread or the story line of the research which integrates all aspects of the emerging theory” (Hawker & Kerr, 2007, p. 95). It subsumes most of the strategies the interviewees described in the present study, and it also heavily relates to the large ‘finding similarities and establishing common ground’ category. Thus, it has the potential for “major explanatory power” (Payne, 2007, p. 81) in the context of RQ1. Notably, the interviewees’ accounts seem to support Howard and Levine’s (2001, p. 243) argument that it is an open mind and genuine interest which distinguish those building positive relationships from those who fail in doing so. Moreover, it seems that the strategies identified in the present study match the intercultural skills outlined by UNITAR fairly well, as shown in Table 6. This is hardly a coincidence. As described in the ensuing section, the lines between intercultural competence and building positive relationships with locals appear rather blurred.

Strategies	UNITAR skills
Finding similarities, establishing common ground	Listening Meeting people where they are
Showing interest	Listening Meeting people where they are
Adjusting to the context	Learning to use multiple communication styles Meeting people where they are
Accepting difference	Increasing tolerance for ambiguity Recognizing multiple perspectives Developing multiple interpretations

Resisting one's prejudices	Suspending assumptions and value judgments Increasing tolerance for ambiguity Recognizing multiple perspectives Developing multiple interpretations
Being respectful	Practicing cultural humility
–	Enhancing perception skills

Table 6. Overlap between the strategies identified in the present study and intercultural skills proposed by United Nations Institute for Training and Research (2017, pp. 176-177).

IV.b. RQ2: Role of intercultural competence

Selective coding proved most problematic concerning RQ2 as the boundaries between intercultural competence and building positive relationships were blurred. For instance, in most extracts quoted in the previous section, intercultural competence is directly or indirectly touched upon: Extract 8 views finding similarities as the fastest route to intercultural competence, extract 11 mentions adjustment “to their cultural ways,” extract 15 stresses the importance of context-specificity for intercultural competence, extract 17 reminds of the boundaries and norms of the host culture, extract 20 implies some sort of empathizing or perspective-taking, and extract 26 establishes that intercultural competence in UCP is not compatible with feeling superior to the locals. It should not surprise, then, that the ‘being open-minded’ category described in RQ1 reminds of the MPQ’s open-mindedness and flexibility traits. However, the results of the present study suggest that ‘being open-minded’ is in fact not a passive trait, not merely opening your mental gates to the world. Rather, it is active behavior, i.e. ‘behaving open-mindedly.’ In this sense, the ICAPS’ openness and flexibility dimensions might hence be a more suitable conceptualization. Furthermore, the MPQ’s social initiative (‘showing interest’) and cultural empathy (‘accepting difference’), and to a lesser extent the ICAPS’ emotional stability dimension (extract 19) and the DMIS’ person-centeredness (extract 12) are also evident. In addition, the few rather small categories visually grouped around intercultural competence during selective coding reveal strong associations with the ‘being open-minded’ category as well: A ‘willingness to understand others’ and a ‘willingness to learn’ facilitate adjustment to the context and motivate showing interest and listening attentively while ‘humility’ enables resisting prejudices and accepting things as they are. Moreover, some interviewees even defined intercultural competence in terms of building positive relationships:

(Extract 28, OOG): If you are competent in that area, you're able to form good relationships with people from other cultures

(Extract 29, KEA): For me cultural competence is a really broad-reaching term [...] this big spectrum on figuring out how to relate to people that are different than you.

These examples suffice to demonstrate the difficulties in identifying tentative categories distinct from those in building positive relationships. In fact, to challenge the seemingly strong association between building positive relationships and intercultural competence, the participant interviewed last for the present study was asked “what is more important than intercultural competence in the field?”

(Extract 30, KEA): I'm really hard-pressed to think of something that would be more important than that. [...] I'm really struggling to think of something.

Generally speaking, this overlap is highly plausible: If intercultural competence is “the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations” (Deardorff, 2006, pp. 247-248), such ability is conceptually inherently fundamental to building positive relationships across cultures. However, HMG carefully discriminated between understanding of cultural differences and behaving accordingly, painting a more nuanced picture.²⁰

(Extract 31, HMG): I would like to separate cultural competence [...] [from] acting in cultural competence, because I can understand that everybody's gonna be late in Colombia and still work to demand that they be earlier [...] So understanding is knowing where things are and then competence would be able to act it out, act through it.

This nicely mirrors (i) UNITAR's definition of intercultural competence as knowing what is appropriate and acting upon it (United Nations Institute for Training and Research, 2017, p. 176), (ii) the differentiation between cognitive and behavioral CQ, and (iii) to some extent the distinction between cultural empathy and flexibility in the MPQ. Even the DMIS makes a similar differentiation despite its focus on worldviews. It is only at the ethnorelative worldview stages, in particular at ‘adaptation,’ that interpretations of cultural difference are sophisticated and holistic enough for individuals “to express their alternative cultural experience in culturally appropriate feelings and behavior” (Bennett, 2004, pp. 7-8). Otherwise, they remain “fluent fools” (Bennett, 2004, p. 6), i.e. commanding culturally relevant skills or knowledge without commanding an understanding for their appropriate

²⁰ Other interviewees hinted at this as well but HMG was the only one to express it clearly.

application. In this sense, a metaphor some interviewees referred to appears quite relevant and trenchant, namely *navigating differences*. Without digressing too much toward linguistic interpretation, some intriguing elements can be observed: if the journey at sea refers to living and working in a different cultural environment, with the winds as opportunities and the waves as cultural challenges, then the sailor's job is to avail of these opportunities and carefully mitigate the dangers.²¹ Merely being enthusiastic about the journey or knowing about wind and water movements or understanding how to react to them is futile without a sense of how to behave in action, at sea. The fact that HMG highlights this dichotomy more than 15 years after Howard and Levine (2001, p. 243) observed similar cases could suggest that some UCPs still show arrogance and dogmatism today (see also extract 26). In the end, however, HMG agrees with the assumption of intercultural competence as a preeminent factor in building positive relationships with locals. Nevertheless, a few interviewees did challenge it, as discussed next.

IV.b.i. The 'cultural' in intercultural competence

As RJJ explained with his comparison of urbanites and farmers in extract 18, it may be inadequate to construe intercultural competence solely as inter-national competence without taking into account other variables such as socio-economic ones or class. In a similar vein, OOG draws on his experience in UCP and at home to question the utility of culture in explaining individual differences:

(Extract 32, OOG): Being open and being able to work [...] with different people, I don't think that this is something that's unique to working across cultures with people from other countries because [...] I work in [hometown], [...] I come across people with wildly differing approaches to things and worldviews and I wonder if there's actually as much difference that I would come across in working with [compatriots] than with people from another part of the world.

(Extract 33, OOG): What is the difference between, what is culture on the one hand, and what is personality on the other hand? [...] I work with people from very different [countries] sometimes and we work together absolutely, very easily, [...] we've never met before, we sat down, we did this training, easy. No problem. But I know that I work with other people from [home country]: really difficult. So [...] I'm wondering about how useful it is to think about cultural competence and maybe to think about it as the ability to

²¹ Assuming that the vessel in question is a sailing ship and neglecting that waves result from winds.

work with difference, people who have different ways of operating, different personalities and those might be from your own culture but they might be from somewhere else.

Heine (2012) admits that “there is much variability among individuals who belong to the same culture” (p. 4) but asserts that cultural differences can and do manifest themselves as differences in group averages, whatever the proxy used for culture (p. 5). Concerning “the ability to work with difference” even within one’s home country or ingroup as described by OOG (extract 33), several attempts have been made to conceptualize interpersonal competence. For example, the Interpersonal Competence Questionnaire (ICQ, Buhrmester, Furman, Wittenberg & Reis, 1988) includes five factors, namely “(a) initiation of interactions and relationships, (b) assertion of personal rights and displeasure with others, (c) self-disclosure of personal information, (d) emotional support of others, and (e) management of interpersonal conflicts that arise in close relationships” (p. 992). A five-factor structure is also proposed in the Social Problem Solving Inventory (SPSI, Maydeu-Olivares & D’Zurilla, 1996), with two problem orientation (positive vs. negative) and three problem-solving factors (rational, impulsive/careless, avoidant) (pp. 127-129). In the only study of its kind, Graf and Harland (2005) correlated individuals’ scores on these two interpersonal competence instruments and a few of instruments measuring intercultural competence. Their results suggest that the instruments do indeed measure different capacities, raising doubts as to whether they could be used interchangeably (Graf & Harland, 2005, p. 55). This is in line with the claim of Ang et al. (2015) that “in contrast to emotional and social intelligence, CQ focuses explicitly on intercultural interactions” (p. 282). However, Graf and Harland (2005) did not include any of the four intercultural competence instruments reviewed in Chapter 2 of this thesis. Furthermore, they addressed the measurement but not the conceptual level, precluding conclusions about the relationship between intercultural competence and interpersonal competence as concepts. A cursory comparison suggests limited overlap: The ICQ’s initiation and emotional support dimensions strongly resemble the MPQ’s social initiative and cultural empathy dimensions, respectively, while emotional regulation (ICAPS) and emotional stability (MPQ) are reflected rudimentarily in interpersonal conflict management (ICQ) and problem-solving (SPSI). Notably, emotional regulation and stability arguably underlie conflict management and problem-solving behavior and not vice versa. In this sense, then, the intercultural competence concepts are actually more foundational than their interpersonal competence counterparts. However, a full exploration of the relation

between intercultural and interpersonal competence is beyond the scope of this thesis.²² The question raised by OOG is thus an exciting and largely untapped avenue for future research (for a similar call to action see Emmerling & Richard, 2012).

IV.b.ii. Being self-aware

Aside from these deliberations, a term occasionally mentioned by the interviewees was ‘self-awareness,’ a characteristic screened for during recruitment and cultivated during pre-deployment and field training:

(Extract 34, KEA): The ideal candidate [...] is self-aware, [...] they know themselves and they know their strengths, they know their weaknesses, they know how they react to things, and can communicate that well to others and [...] are honest about it, honest about their shortcomings or their challenges.

(Extract 35, RER): For me part of intercultural competence is just [...] constantly questioning myself on where my beliefs are coming from and in what ways my background influences the way I interact with people or maybe the way that they see me.

(Extract 36, OOG): That you’re perhaps aware of your own culture and your own built-in biases and assumptions about the way that the world is so that you just don’t take your own view as the truth or the correct way of seeing things

(Extract 37, RJJ): I think it's important in difficult situations, for example communication or conflicts, that you're aware of [...] how your cultural background influences your behavior, and what are the difficult points where you have to really maybe communicate in a different way

Self-awareness is variously understood by the UCPs as a form of deep self-knowledge (KEA), as being self-reflective and self-critical (RER), and as being broadminded and undogmatic (OOG) though these definitions seem highly interrelated. Moreover, self-aware individuals are able to tailor their behavior and communication according to the context (RJJ) and to accept different opinions and resist their prejudices (OOG), two of the qualities distinguishing an open mind as argued above. To a great extent, these definitions reflect metacognitive CQ because “people with strength in metacognitive CQ consciously question their own cultural assumptions, reflect during interactions, and adjust their cultural knowledge [and strategies]

²² For instance, Spitzberg & Cupach (1984, cited in Rubin & Martin, 1994, p. 33) identify a total of six different approaches to interpersonal competence.

when interacting with those from other cultures” (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008, p. 5). Notably, the above definitions of self-awareness correspond with ‘cultural self-awareness’ in the DMIS:

The missing piece in Minimization, and the issue that needs to be resolved to move into ethnorelativism, is the recognition of your own culture (cultural self-awareness). [...] This is the ability to experience culture as a context. Only when you see that all your beliefs, behaviors, and values are at least influenced by the particular context in which you were socialized can you fully imagine alternatives to them. (Bennett, 2004, p. 6)

If *acquiring* self-awareness may be the single most important step in developing intercultural sensitivity according to the DMIS, then the UCPs’ strong emphasis on the need for self-awareness is highly justified. Nevertheless, in the field of social work some have raised doubts about the significance of self-awareness for intercultural competence. In Yan and Wong’s (2005, p. 184) opinion, the assumptions commonly made by those models, i.e. that humans are inherently cultural beings but the social worker happens to be able to transcend culture’s clutches through self-awareness, are profoundly contradictory to each other. They contend that “self-awareness in cross-cultural practice, therefore, is not about bracketing [one’s] own cultural influences, but about creating a dialogic space” (Yan & Wong, 2005, p. 186) where cultural factors are neither overpowering nor ignored by either worker or client but appropriately and constructively addressed. Extrapolating this, UCPs can and should not ‘deactivate’ their own culture (see also the discussion of RQ3). Rather they should acknowledge and use it to build positive relationships with locals, according to this view.

To conclude, a considerable overlap between the concept of intercultural competence and the strategies for building positive relationships with locals emerged in the present study, with all four psychological models of intercultural competence providing valuable references and insights. It also appears premature to infer that intercultural competence should be discarded in the context of UCP in favor of interpersonal competence. In fact, models of the latter might be less capable of informing building positive relationships with locals. Moreover, while being open-minded could be the core category regarding building positive relationships, being self-aware could be the core category regarding intercultural competence. Nonetheless, their relationship and the direction of causality remain unclear, and as these issues are also not discussed in models of self-awareness, future research is needed (see the following section for a suggestion).

IV.c. RQ3: Challenges of relationships

This section first showcases the challenges and pitfalls of building and maintaining positive relationships with the locals. Thereafter, a discussion is devoted to a topic which seems entirely overlooked in my literature review, namely the relationships inside UCP teams.

IV.c.i. Being under intense pressure

The interviewees' accounts of their day-to-day work made it clear that they find themselves under intense pressure, almost anytime, anywhere. As FSS pointed out:

(Extract 38, FSS): You're in a war zone. It's not just going to study abroad or to do it trip with your church, synagogue, or mosque. It's a way more intense situation.

The grave physical danger aggravates the psychological pressure which stems from a combination of cultural differences, peculiarities of UCPs' relationships with the locals, and UCPs' own personalities, skills and attitudes, as explained next.

Constraining yourself

The categories developed to answer RQ1 suggested, among others, adjusting to the context, accepting difference and resisting prejudices and premature judgment as important elements of building positive relationships. However, there is another side to the coin. Specifically, many UCPs felt the necessity if not coercion to constrain themselves, given the watchful eyes of the locals:

(Extract 39, RER): There's obviously still sexism in [home country] but it's different [here] from what I'm used to so it can be frustrating to feel I have to change the way I dress or I act so people don't get the wrong impression.

(Extract 40, HMG): As somebody who is female, and I have a higher voice than most men do and I have a voluptuous figure, you cannot appear more interested in anything than you absolutely need to [...] and that's just like every moment. [...] You're asking about intercultural understanding and competence, not host country competence, so like that to me says "what is their understanding of us too"

RER and HMG's cases point toward sexism, gender values and corresponding role perceptions in their host community. Yet it is also community beliefs other than about gender which restrict the UCPs in their freedom:

(Extract 41, FSS): [Unless] people have [pre-existing] long-distance relationships [...] you're in a situation where you're not able to [...] have a relationship with somebody [local], you can't really do that unless you have a relationship with one of your team

members which doesn't happen very often [...] So that's a sense where [it's] not really a sacrifice but, rather, I guess put those things on hold while you're doing this work, because you're in a situation where that's not really possible [...] [Partner organization] has a rule against drinking alcohol, so when you're in the community accompanying there—again, you're up there for six months, up to a year for many of us—you're not drinking alcohol unless you're on vacation. So those are two examples of [sacrifice]: romantic relationships and just having a beer.

This description strongly resembles Mahony's (2006) warning against "violation by mission staff of local ethical standards and codes of conduct" (p. 76) and AMG's definition of intercultural competence as fitting in without disruption (extract 16). In addition, one could see a possible association between being open-minded and being self-aware, the tentative core categories of building positive relationships and intercultural competence, respectively, identified in the present study. To function in a context as described by RER, HMG and FSS, UCP candidates require particular skills highlighted in RQ1, namely being open-minded in terms of adjusting to the context and accepting difference as well as being respectful. Simultaneously, some capacity for *reflection* about and *self-monitoring* of behavior is necessary to avoid committing a gaffe. This, in turn, could be related to being self-aware. Although these are pure speculations, recent empirical studies suggest that self-monitoring with the goal of seeking social approval, called "acquisitive self-monitoring[,] is *equivalent* to metatrait Plasticity – that is, the shared variance of Extraversion and Openness/Intellect" (Wilmot, DeYoung, Stillwell & Kosinski, 2016, p. 343; emphasis in original). Furthermore, from a neuropsychological perspective some have argued that self-monitoring and self-awareness are two interconnected facets of 'insight,' with the former relating to "judgements about one's abilities and limitations *in relation to the current situation*" (Toglia & Kirk, 2000, p. 62; emphasis added) and the latter to stable, situation-independent self-knowledge (pp. 59-60). Although both groups of authors employ very similar definitions of self-monitoring, further debate and research is necessary to investigate the proposed intermediary role of self-monitoring between open-mindedness and self-awareness.

In any case, prospective UCPs without these skills almost certainly need to develop them during their assignment, lest detrimental repercussions for the mission and the long-term partnership between the community and the UCP organization follow. As FSS mentioned above, this unavoidably entails sacrificing individual desires and preferences on the part of the UCPs for they will clash with the greater goals. This in turn demands UCP candidates who show flexibility in their self-concept and accept a given role, as described by EUB:

(Extract 42, EUB): I think another thing is do you have a capacity or does a potential accompanier have a capacity to see beyond just themselves as a person and to see themselves more as somebody in a role, can they conceive of themselves as first and foremost as a representative of an organization rather than a person? And of course that's difficult when you're living amongst people and you make relationships and you make friendships and it's very profound and it's all on the doorstep and I mean it's tough, it's tough! But ultimately you're always gonna be [NGO] before you're EUB and whoever

Reaching your limits

Even so, the pressure and demands of UCP work can prove overwhelming at times. For a few, this could simply be the strong, dreadful impressions of poverty. Yet for many, it pertains to staying committed to their own values and beliefs in an environment that generally requires them to adjust and constrain themselves to the local standards:

(Extract 43, RJJ): I think [...] cultural or intercultural competence is also about: "Okay, it's different culture but where are also my personal limits, [...] where is my limit where I say 'Until this point and no more.'" These comments maybe I could just not take it personally but there is also things where you could say "Okay, [...] it's too much for me"

(Extract 44, GBJ): We were sitting together and then he's like: "Ah you know all those gay, [...] they brought four more gay people here!" And I say: "You are very disrespectful, you should respect people, you cannot go around and talk like that." [...] And this guy was very disturbed by my statement and then I talked with him a little bit, I felt how disgusted I was by his way of talking

(Extract 45, BAM): Sometimes it can be tricky because we're in their culture and the sexism is really strong here in Colombia and we need to be between respecting their culture and how [...] they grew learning that this is how it is and things are never gonna change, but also if it's our job to tell them that this is wrong. So I think it's very important doing accompaniment to learn how to listen to people and to respect them but also be very true of our beliefs

(Extract 46, RER): Sometimes it can still be draining with [...] a few men in particular who just always make jokes I don't really find appropriate, it can just be draining

Evidently, what the interviewees describe here is very much dependent on their individual expectations and personal values. Generally, there was strong agreement on the need to enter the field with a realistic outlook, not only on one's own possible contribution and impact but also on cultural norms. For instance, as implied in several extracts above, gender norms and

gender role perceptions once again seem to be among the primary fault lines between locals and UCPs. Nevertheless, in the following RER and BAM describe that overt rebellion or dismissing one's organizational role has to be pondered about well, depending on the situation at hand:

(Extract 47, RER): There's times when I'll challenge it and then there's times when [...] I maybe I don't say something because I don't think that it's really my place to call people out for those things.

(Extract 48, BAM): Sometimes people come to me and they start to talk about women and if I know how to dance and if I can teach them how to dance and sometimes those questions, I don't think it's appropriate or I'm not very happy with them but sometimes [it's] just the way I can connect with people [...] Some types of oppression we are not going to respect, for example some harassment that had happened so many times because they think that it's okay if you touch someone's body, so this type of things we have zero tolerance but some things we also have to learn how to navigate.

Both extracts demonstrate UCPs' struggle to reconcile their mandate and organizational role (see EUB in extract 42) with their personal values and beliefs. In fact, discussions on the meaning and understanding of UCP were a dominant part of most interviews (see the green cluster in Appendix 3) and of the interviewees' daily work as well.

IV.c.ii. Being too close

Although a comprehensive exploration of these various understandings of UCP would go beyond the scope of this thesis, it is worth noting that some interviewees regarded positive relationships not from a motivational or instrumental perspective (see extract 3 and 4) but on the basis of what UCP fundamentally means and represents to them, namely lived solidarity, i.e. an expression of standing together as equal partners in the face of injustice. Positive relationships between UCPs and the locals are thus a welcome if not desirable facet of lived solidarity. In the day-to-day work, however, it is not often clear where solidarity ends and partisanship begins:

(Extract 49, RER): To me it's definitely a blurry line of what maybe is too much involvement and what's solidarity.

(Extract 50, HMG): I guess debating where the lines are is literally an everyday discussion

Crossing the line and ‘being too close’ to the local population or some members thereof can have manifold consequences:

(Extract 51, RJJ): I think it's quite easy that if you identify too much with them you also take over their security analysis without analyzing it. [...] And [...] if you're just thinking and acting as another community member, then there is actually [...], sounds a bit harsh, but there is not so much use about you being there, apart from your personal experience

Losing your own perspective and ceasing to provide different opinions essentially renders UCPs worthless from an operational point of view, as there is no critical or collaborative discussion about the best way forward. Even more, it might endanger the UCPs and the people they supposedly protect:

(Extract 52, RER): I don't know if I necessarily agree with that but I can see that[...] on the security level that sometimes it can become more of a threat if someone has been here for a long time and everyone knows who they are, the military knows who they are, that maybe they're not taken as seriously as an independent observer, I guess.

Hence, if other actors have the impression of relationships too close, this can let the UCP fail at her most fundamental task – protecting civilians in conflict areas. That a lack of impartiality can cause lasting damage to the mission has been described frequently in the literature (Coy, 2012; Schirch, 2006, pp. 61-64). However, a similar problem can arise if UCPs relate to the “wrong people” within the local community, raising doubts about the UCPs’ character among the rest of the community:

(Extract 53, EUB): There are so many internal dynamics, [...] some people are slightly more out-of-favor than others and if you're relating to the wrong kind of people [...], then it was observed who she was relating to more and that caused concern.

Yet enjoying relationships too positive can also result in other undesirable situations such as the locals’ exploiting divisions within the UCP team or, quite to the contrary, an emotional dependence on particular UCPs. Furthermore, according to the interviewees, reaching the moment of being too close is strongly correlated with the amount of time spent in a community:

(Extract 54, HMG): I mean in terms of being too close, that's something that absolutely comes up far more, the more you stay in a place, the harder it is to separate that.

(Extract 55, MHP): I think a lot of the time it comes from different motivations for being here, the people that I'm thinking of in that situation are people that have come for quite a

long time for short stints here, a lot of them have a lot of experience here which is really valuable but can often then trap you in the mindset of knowing better or knowing more in some situations, and not necessarily just knowing more than us as people on the team but knowing more than people in the community.

These statements are to some extent in conflict with Furnari's (2014, p. 253) interviewees who claimed that more time spent in the community means more positive relationships. It appears that too much time spent can actually result in relationships too positive. Interestingly, MHP also draws attention to the observation that sometimes UCPs dismiss the locals' perspective altogether rather than identifying with it. Whether being too close manifests itself in the form of rejection or identification may depend on the presence and strength of the individual UCP's own needs and agenda vis-à-vis a sense of caring and solidarity. Offering a way out of this dichotomy may be an individual's ability to show flexibility in their self-concept and accept their situation-specific role, as described by EUB in extract 42. Simultaneously, though, doing wholly without relationships is also barely an option, as this extreme case mentioned by FSS exemplifies:

(Extract 56, FSS): I heard one accompanier tell me that the best accompanier is he or she who is not remembered by those that we accompany because they come on the team, do accompaniment, provide protection, and don't develop these deeper relationships that sometimes could compromise the independence and the separation between the two organizations, us and the community.

Therefore, keeping a healthy proximity to locals in which their perspective is still heard and embraced alongside the UCPs' perspective is likely the most promising approach.

IV.c.iii. Team conflicts – the breaking point

The present study was based on the hypothesis that positive relationships with locals are of utmost importance in UCP, and that intercultural competence could play a paramount role in building these. Yet the interviewees made it clear that this might have been too narrow a focus to begin with. The overwhelming majority of them emphasized that it is in fact relationships inside a UCP team which usually undermine mission effectiveness:

(Extract 57, KEA): People tend to be on their best behavior when they're interacting with partners, it's not very common to have mishaps with partners or government officials or armed actors [...], people usually do a decent job with that, it's much more about their interactions with their teammates and causing discord on the team and having a safe work environment for the coworkers or for themselves

(Extract 58, OOG): I think it's as crucial within the group as well because projects can be incredibly dysfunctional and chaotic and in crisis often due to poor relationships and poor team dynamics within [...] the UCP team. And in my experience that has been the more common problem.

(Extract 59, FSS): I think it's really important having that unity in the team. You can still protect and accompany communities even when there are internal disagreements and even tensions within an organization, because if you maintain your public profile and strong relationships with the organizations that are accompanied—as well as with the authorities and other non-governmental organizations—you can continue to accompany. But it's a lot more difficult. The mental health of the accompaniers is really stressed when you have those internal divisions, which is part of life, it's part of organizations. And I would say, the most challenging thing that I've faced are those internal issues, rather than actually doing the work with the accompanied organizations and the authorities.

It is possible that my initial reviewing of military peacekeeping literature obscured the issue of team-internal relationships. Although the military is arguably an expert institution in building team cohesion (see Siebold, 2007), intercultural competence within its units should be a less overt issue, especially in ethnically relatively homogenous forces. Potential differences are most likely referred to as differences in mentality instead of culture, with the consequence being that “interpersonal engagement” skills (Hill, 2015) or “interaction knowledges, skills, and attributes” (Bowden, Keenan, Ramli & Heffner, 2007) are focused on. Tellingly, a call for papers “on building adaptive capacity within multicultural teams” in the military was only issued in 2010 by Burke, Salazar and Salas but has seemingly remained unanswered. It thus appears that the ‘intercultural’ is reserved for relationships with those outside the military unit, which can either mean with the locals on the ground, with military contingents of other nations or with civilian units in multinational peacekeeping missions (see e.g. Duffey, 2000; Rubinstein et al., 2008). In UCP teams, however, individuals hailing from a variety of different places are forced to work together for the first time, in an environment that – once again – can only be characterized as high pressure:

(Extract 60, OOG): People are going away to a part of the world that they don't know so well, they're a long way from home, in my experience of is they are living in a house 24/7 with a bunch of other people who they start off not knowing very well, the work is stressful very often, and it's very difficult, I mean quite volatile situations [...] They don't have that outlet of going home and bitching to their partner about their colleagues [...], to me that's always an element of feeling safe as well, I guess for many people in a

conventional workplace they get some sense of safety and protection from their social life outside of work.

(Extract 61, KEA): At least in [NGO] you're living and working with the same people 24 hours a day, seven days a week. [...] They're your whole social network, cause you're living in a foreign country and that's a really intense pressure to put on a relationship, and then you add in trauma that people witness in the field and all of that and [...] it just makes those relationships really difficult

UCPs do not go on luxurious mountain retreats but work in conflict areas where their or the lives of others may be threatened on a daily basis (see extract 38). OOG and KEA also draw attention here to the tiny social network UCPs commonly possess in the field, let alone friends, and the scarce opportunities to take time out from each other while on duty. Consequently, the UNITAR manual states that intercultural competence is also relevant inside UCP teams as unfamiliarity with one's team mates and the external pressures "can lead to misunderstanding and conflict over matters such as differing views on gender roles" (United Nations Institute for Training and Research, 2017, p. 176). Similarly, Howard and Levine (2001, pp. 216-229, pp. 250-251) devote ample space to team-internal dynamics. On the one hand, they call for deliberately creating diversity in UCP teams in terms of age, gender and ethnicity. On the other hand, they advise extensive training to cope both with this diversity and with the stressful realities on the ground. Concerning the latter, the following issues have emerged in the present study as particularly strong bones of contention inside the teams.

Feeling lonely

Despite or perhaps because of the constant proximity among team mates, a typical problem for UCPs is loneliness. As extract 60 describes, UCPs on a team rarely know each other before being deployed to the field, or only barely so. Moreover, with most UCPs usually staying for a year at most, missions are characterized by a high degree of staff turnover:

(Extract 62, KEA): We call it the 'revolving door' [...] We constantly have people coming and going, and so that absolutely plays into these dynamics, there's constantly somebody new who you don't know, who you may not trust, who you may not feel comfortable with, that you don't know how to act around, that you're still getting to know while at the same time you're saying goodbye to people that are your best friends or that you've been with and there's constant upheaval

On the one hand, the frequent turnover complicates molding a mutually supportive and trusting team out of the UCPs. This, for example, has repercussions for the degree of communication among UCPs:

(Extract 63, GBJ): And it creates a loneliness in that way. For example there was a guy who shared his experience as a [soldier] and I could not tell the team who was that guy. [...] Of course I spoke with the closer ones, [...] but the others, I didn't tell them because sometimes some delicate situations, you just tell the closest ones that you really trust because you don't want to risk anything [...] for the person that you accompany.

On the other, it also impedes building positive relationships with the locals who are less inclined to connect to what they perceive as sojourners:

(Extract 64, RER): On the individual level it can be a drawback because people know that we as individuals we're gonna be rotating in and out, so they're really friendly but they also maybe don't invest as much time in building relationships with each of us because they know that in six months or however long, there's gonna be a new person.

In other words, the social network of UCPs can sometimes be rather small since they face the challenge of constantly building trust with newly arriving team mates while the locals might be less willing to repeatedly build positive relationships which unavoidably end soon after. Building positive relationships is particularly challenging in such an environment, underscoring the relevance of skillfully applying the strategies discussed in RQ1.

Dealing with boredom

An intriguing account of team-internal dynamics was provided by OOG, complemented by RJJ's observation:

(Extract 65, OOG): When teams are busy and they've got a lot to do, these kind of crises don't happen. Because it's all exciting, they're going out, there's lots of accompaniment work, there's incidents to deal with, you feel that sense of purpose perhaps, which brought you all together to do this job in the first place, and nobody's got the time to sit down and worry about internal relations so much in the team because everybody's so busy and occupied with other things. But we've really noticed that when for different reasons you have a bunch of people sitting together in a house and there isn't so much work to do that often then they turn inwards on themselves and small differences just become magnified and become the source of total relationship breakdowns that lead to the whole organization becoming quite dysfunctional...

(Extract 66, RJJ): And [for] a lot of people [...] it's really a period of self-reflection because there is also a lot of times where you just sit at the countryside or you have to wait for somebody or you walk so you have a lot of time to your thoughts, and this is sometimes nice but sometimes it could also be very difficult for you [...], to be [...] thrown upon yourself, that you have to deal with yourself in this situation

OOG's interpretation strikingly resembles the inverted-U theory of performance under stress, which in simple words claims "that increasing stress is good to a point, beyond which it becomes bad" (Muse, Harris & Feild, 2003, p. 351). Therefore, the very low levels of stress which OOG described are as detrimental to performance as very high levels of stress, according to the theory. However, Abramis' (1994, p. 553) extensive cross-sectional study on the effects of stressors on technical and social job performance found either negative linear relationships or none at all. Interestingly, two of the three stressors used in his study were 'role ambiguity' and 'role conflict,' the same variables which characterize UCPs' day-to-day work (see extracts 42, 49, 50, 56). Abramis (1994) concludes about them that the "existence of these stressors at *any* level will be detrimental to performance (p. 554; emphasis in original) as they showed the strongest negative correlations with job performance. In contrast to this, others have argued that such studies usually fail to "capture stress levels below the optimal level" (Muse et al., 2003, p. 356), for instance because of employing an inherently negative connotation of stress (p. 358-359). Consequently, they believe that the inverted-U-theory has yet to see a proper assessment of its main proposition. Moreover, most of this debate and research focuses on the individual level only. Of the few group level studies that exist, one uses a conceptual framework which does not correspond with OOG's interpretation, only computes linear correlations, and was conducted in the hospitality sector (Hon & Chan, 2013). Another examines the effects of a particular form of stress, namely team-role stress, on team and individual performance but investigates only one-sided hypotheses (Savelsbergh, Gevers, van der Heijden & Poell, 2012). Thus, OOG's inverted-U hypothesis of stress and team performance is yet to be tested scientifically.

Concerning RJJ's observation above, research shows that moments of self-reflection can have quite positive effects, depending on how they are handled by UCPs. For example, it has been consistently found that self-insight relates to subjective well-being (e.g. Harrington & Loffredo, 2011; Lyke, 2009). However, holding dysfunctional attitudes about oneself, the world at large and the future directly undermines self-insight and positive evaluation of oneself, resulting in less subjective well-being (Stein & Grant, 2014, pp. 513-516). Moreover, one study suggests that perceived social support is associated with resolution-focused

rumination, i.e. coming to terms with an event, but not with rumination to understand the event (Siewert, Kubiak, Jonas & Weber, 2013, pp. 1087-1089). Hence, perceived social support from team mates may assist UCPs in availing themselves of the moments of self-reflection described by RJJ. In light of the loneliness they often experience, the establishment and expansion of external support mechanisms and rest and relaxation cycles by UCP organizations, as described in many interviews, is a wise precautionary measure in this regard (see also Birkeland, 2016, pp. 50-51).

Consensus decision-making

Finally, another focal point of team-internal conflicts in the present study was decision-making processes. By their very nature, different opinions and views come to the fore and enter the arena of mutual debate. What is more, the interviewees' organizations all implement consensus decision-making in their teams which can prove outright arduous at times:

(Extract 67, OOG): Everything is negotiated and I think doing that is tiring and can be quite stressful for a lot of people if there are already conflicts about other things in the group, about how you live together, how you share space together, how long you talk and in a meeting [....] So we try to use consensus so that only the people that have to be involved in the decision are involved, it's not everybody does everything. And I think there, people were not clear so then some people felt very left out of the decision-making processes that they should have been part of and got angry about that.

(Extract 68, FSS): Personal preferences that people have can sometimes make it challenging to make collective decisions, when you try to make a decision for the good of the organization and those who you accompany. And I think [you cannot underestimate] having communication skills, [knowing] how to deal with disagreements, and really learning how to make decisions by consensus, which [are not] so easy. For me, one of the big lessons and the benefits of having accompanied was learning how to do that.

(Extract 69, AMG): We do a lot of group decision-making and the group decisions almost always outweigh the individual decision. So I can imagine where an individual might want to approach an issue one way but in a group discussion they decide to do it another way and that would be a tension.

It is in these moments of making decisions collectively and on a consensual basis that a lot of the challenges mentioned earlier in this section materialize: in addition to the high pressure work environment in which UCPs already feel that they have to abandon much of their own values and beliefs, they might also feel like restraining themselves and their opinions even

within their only social network in the field, which in turn may cause further exhaustion and loneliness. Communicating supportively with each other, a crucial prerequisite to consensus decision-making (Sager & Gastil, 2006) is certainly much harder in such situations. In this regard, Howard and Levine (2001) observed “how extreme stress and dysfunctional participants can undermine the consensus process within larger and multi-ethnic groups” (p. 220). Indeed, cultural differences among UCPs can impede reaching a decision:

(Extract 70, OOG): There were some differences which I don't know if they're down to personality or culture or what but just about the way that you do things, how long do you discuss things before making a decision [...] It actually did fall in quite stereotyped way, so Northern Europeans speaking quite to the point, people from Latin America spending a long time explaining how that felt, and people feeling frustrated with that.

Evidently, intercultural competence may help bridge the “differences in decision-making styles or communication styles” (United Nations Institute for Training and Research, 2017, p. 176) arising from cultural differences. However, various culture-unrelated threats and limitations to consensus decision-making are also mentioned in the UCP literature, such as time pressures or teams too large (Howard & Levine (2001, p. 250), or the constant staff turnover and the resulting weariness about discussing the same issues again and again (Coy, 2003, pp. 95-101). Furthermore, being too close to the locals carries weight as well:

(Extract 71, FSS): There can be tensions on the team based on those kind of relationships, how close are certain people to the community [while] others maybe are not as close.[...] For example some people are able to maintain almost a colder analysis of [whether or not to accept] petitions when to accompany and where than other people that are emotionally and personally more invested [with accompanied partners] that they care about in a different way, and so that can influence when you have a petition to go to a certain place and having to make a decision about that

As argued above, the kinds of relationships which UCPs build with the locals on the ground depend partly on their own understanding of UCP, their understanding of their role and the presence of a personal agenda. Likewise, Coy (2003) concluded from his in-depth research of consensus decision-making in two PBI teams in Sri Lanka that “the [UCP] team context includes the complicated intersection where fear of personal danger, organizational identity, and group decision making meet, often in competing ways” (p. 115). Nonetheless, there seems to be general agreement among UCP scholars that consensus is the natural decision-making process in UCP as it reflects the underlying nonviolent ideology and may actually

increase the sense of individual ownership of decisions taken (Coy, 2003, pp. 115; Howard & Levine, 2001, p. 250). Coy (2003) even suggest that consensus decision-making done right “can create the safe emotional spaces that many [UCP] team members need to operate effectively” (p. 115).

In summary, while boredom and consensus decision-making were identified as problem areas for UCP teams by Howard and Levine (2001, pp. 219-221, p. 227, p. 229) alongside impartiality and the pressures of physical danger, cultural discomfort, trauma and living together 24/7, feeling lonely appears to be a category overlooked thus far. Unfortunately, it was not possible to examine to what extent relationship challenges and team-internal issues outlined here apply to other professionals working as teams in high-risk, high-pressure environments such as humanitarian assistance/ disaster relief workers. For instance, all of the ‘self-generated risks’ for humanitarians described by Egeland, Harmer and Stoddard (2011, pp. 15-17) deal with broader political considerations rather than with risks on the ground. Similarly, McCall and Salama (1999, p. 113) name stressors such as physical insecurity, ethical dilemmas and traumatic experiences but none in relation to team-internal issues. Aside from these examples, most research in this field focuses on improving the supply chain mechanisms and processes. One potential rationale for this discrepancy might be “that emergency management [in humanitarian assistance/ disaster relief] is more commonly a problem of communication between teams and between organisations” (Owen, 2014, pp. 143-144) than within teams.

To conclude and return to the very starting point of the present study, it should be remembered that UCPs most often do get their job done and protect civilians from violence successfully despite all challenges among themselves and with locals discussed above. It might indeed be the positive relationships with locals which compensate for team-internal issues and enable UCPs to give their best. In the words of MHP:

(Extract 72, MHP): It always takes a little while to kind of get back in, our team changes, our colleagues change quite regularly because of visa issues so there's always a new dynamic on-team but I do feel quite comfortable, I feel very confident in what I can do and I know that ultimately I feel safe in this community and that has come from connecting with people in the community.

V. CONCLUSION

Building positive relationships with locals is a one of the major strategies and building blocks of Unarmed Civilian Peacekeeping/ Protection (UCP; Furnari, 2014). It increases both the Unarmed Civilian Peacekeepers/ Protectors' (UCPs) effectiveness in protecting local civilians from violence and their own security (Furnari, 2015). In the long run, these positive relationships with the locals may also contribute to peacebuilding (Engelbrecht & Kaushik, 2015; Furnari, Oldenhuis & Julian, 2015). However, there has been only little research into how positive relationships are built by UCPs and what the challenges in this process are. Moreover, while scholars generally recognize that UCP missions in general and the relationships with locals in particular can be jeopardized in case of a lack of intercultural competence among UCPs (Mahony, 2006), no accounts have existed about its possible contribution to relationship-building. Therefore, the present study explored (i) UCPs' predominant ways of building positive relationships with locals, (ii) the role of intercultural competence therein and (iii) the challenges of relationship-building, using semi-structured interviews with 12 former and current UCPs from three different non-governmental organizations within the grounded theory methodology.

The accounts of the UCPs interviewed for the present study posit that being open-minded and behaving accordingly, i.e. showing interest, adjusting to the context, accepting difference, resisting one's prejudices and premature judgment, constitute the core of their relationship-building strategies. Strongly related to these is the necessity to quickly find similarities and establish common ground and the necessity to be respectful.

The interviewees' accounts further suggest that intercultural competence is difficult to separate from building positive relationships. This is highly plausible conceptually: If intercultural competence is "the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations" (Deardorff, 2006, pp. 247-248), this ability must be integral to building positive relationships across cultures. In light of this, it was discussed whether the term and concept of 'interpersonal competence' would be more appropriate. Comparison between a few models of each concept indicated only limited overlap although a deeper inquiry into this question will be necessary. A closer look is also needed regarding the alleged centrality of self-awareness for intercultural competence, as proposed by the interviewees.

Finally, many UCPs described their work on the ground in terms of a high-pressure environment where they have to constrain their personalities and preferences and even find their own values and beliefs challenged and offended. Furthermore, the longer a UCP's

assignment, the likelier the possibility of losing a balanced perspective in favor of identification with the local community or, on the contrary, utter rejection of the locals' views. The interviewees also emphasized that positive relationships among UCP team members are at least as important as those with the locals, and that it is usually in those internal relationships where the rifts occur which can jeopardize an entire mission. In particular, feelings of loneliness and boredom as well as the necessity to take decisions in consensus with team mates hold the strongest potential for team-internal conflict.

The present study has been but a small step toward uncovering what happens on the ground during UCP missions with regard to relationship-building and it would thus benefit from further academic analysis. Future research should aim to overcome the present study's limitations in terms of scope and methods, and to arrive at a more coherent grounded theory of building positive relationships with the locals in UCP. In particular, an examination of the possible relationship between open-mindedness and self-awareness might be included. Further studies could additionally investigate the possible applications of impression management theory to building positive relationships with locals, on the one hand, and of cross-cultural group decision-making models to team-internal relationships, on the other hand. An even more important avenue for research would be to consult the locals themselves to learn about their views on how UCPs should build positive relationships, and whether UCPs' current efforts are actually successful in what they aim to achieve. After all, if UCP purports to be "an innovative model of peacekeeping" (Dziewanski, 2015), it should also be at the forefront of giving a voice to those whose lives it seeks to protect.

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Appendix 1 – Semi-structured interview questions

Introduction, warm-up

- Small talk
- Debriefing: aims of this study
 - *I'm a graduate student in Peace, Mediation & Conflict Research at University of Tampere, Finland, and I'm doing research on intercultural competence in the daily work lives of accompaniment and UCP teams.*
 - *I'd like to find out how they (try to) translate cultural sensitivity into positive relationships with the local population on the ground, and I'm very happy to be able to hear about your experience.*
 - *The interview should take about 45-60 minutes...*
- Asking for consent to audio recording
 - *... and I would like to record the audio for transcribing and analyzing what you have to say compared to other participants - but only if you allow me to do so.*
 - *But if there's anything that you'd like to talk about but don't want to have on record, let me know and I'll turn it off for the time being.*
 - *Also, I would like to ask for your consent to publishing some quotes of yours in academic publications, i.e. most likely only my thesis.*
- Assuring confidentiality and anonymity
 - *All your information will be handled strictly confidentially and will remain anonymous. In publications, I will only use an alias when referring to you (unless of course you wish that I use your real name).*
 - *I'd like to ask you to share some personal information for comparison reasons but it could make you more "identifiable" in publications, so of course you may decline to have them published or to provide those.*
- Informing about right to reject answering and to withdraw
 - *And of course, you may decline to answer any questions, change the topic or end the interview altogether at any moment.*

Personal information (if okay)

- *So let's start with your personal background...*
- *Age:* *gender,*
- *Name of organization:*
- *Missions/ Locations served:*
- *Length of service(s):*
- *Nationality:*

Main part

Motivation

- Can you tell me a little bit about why you decided to apply for this job?

Training

- What was your training like in terms of [cultural awareness] preparation?
 - How extensive, contents, methods?
 - Was the preparation good enough, in your opinion?
- In retrospect, what kind of preparation would you have wanted / should there be?

Daily work

- What does [did] your daily life and work look like?
 - To what extent was it different from what you expected?
 - What made the biggest impression, or what were the biggest surprises?
 - **How did you try to adapt to the new surroundings and the new people?**

Building relationships

- Some people say that positive relationships within your team and with the local population are essential for your success. Is that also your experience?
 - **Can you tell me how you are trying to build positive relationships and trust with locals?**
 - **How do you go about meeting a new local?**
 - **What do you do, what do you think and feel?**
- What do you think are the **most important/effective ways** to build these positive relationships, in your work?
 - What challenges and problems have you faced in this regard?
 - **How important have culture and cultural differences (in your team/with the locals) been in this?**
- How would you define positive relationships?

Intercultural competence

- Some people say that intercultural competence and cultural awareness/sensitivity is essential for these positive relationships. **What do you think of this?**
 - **How would you define intercultural competence? Cultural awareness? Cultural sensitivity?**
 - During your service, have you seen foreigners making some big mistakes, in your opinion?
 - What kind of advice would you give to a new [volunteer/accompanier/UCP] who would soon be in the same position as you were?

Other topics²³

- Relationships inside the team?
- Save-the-world-syndrome? Personal agendas?
- Professional role vs. personal freedoms?
- Importance of similarity to locals?

Clarification questions

- Why?
- How?
- Can you tell me a bit more about this?
- Can you give some examples?
- Can you describe that further?
- What exactly do you mean when you say...?
- What do you think?
- Can you tell me anything else?
- What was it like?
- What did you think then?
- How, if at all, have your views or actions changed?

Wrap up

- *(Demographic questions I forgot to ask.)*
- *(Reconfirm practicalities if necessary.)*
- *Is there anything you'd like to ask me or to add that came up while we were talking?*
- *Alright, then thanks a lot for your time, this has been very interesting!*
- *Is it alright if I contact you again?*
- *Do you know other people that could be worth talking to for this study? Can I maybe contact you later for this?*
- *And of course you can contact me at any time (as well).*
- *So thanks once again, have a good day! Bye.*

²³ These questions were added in the course of the data collection in order to clarify themes which emerged in the first few interviews or to identify contradictions.

Appendix 2 – Email debriefing

Reaching out (Example)

Dear [personal name],

I hope this email finds you well! [Personal name] was so kind to provide me with your contact.

I'm a graduate student in Peace, Mediation & Conflict Research at University of Tampere, Finland, and want to do some research on intercultural competence in the daily work lives of accompaniment and UCP teams.

I'd like to find out how they (try to) translate intercultural competence into positive relationships with the local population on the ground, and from what I've heard you'd be a great person to talk to in this regard.

I can imagine you're really busy so if you think you'd be available for a 45-60 minutes interview via skype, let me know and we can work out the details later.

Have a nice day,
Erich

Debriefing

Thanks [personal name],

great to hear from you! I'd be very happy to interview you. [Day] would be good, I'm still free all day long. Are you in [...] right now, and what time would suit you?

Also, I have to inform you about some practical issues:

- Assuming we talk via skype (or a VoIP of your choice), I would like to record the audio for later transcribing and analysis - but only if you allow me to do so.
- All your information will be handled strictly confidentially and will remain anonymous. In the published thesis I will only use an alias when referring to you (unless of course you wish that I use your real name).
- During the interview, I'd like to ask you to share your age, gender, name of the organization/mission in which you served, length of service, and nationality for comparison reasons but since especially the latter three make you more "identifiable," you of course may decline to provide those.
- Naturally, you may decline to answer any questions, change the topic or end the interview altogether at any moment.

So that's the many technicalities, but at this point, agreeing on the time/date and your consent (or not) to recording would be most relevant.

If you have further questions, feel free to ask anytime!

Best,
Erich

Appendix 3 – Final NVivo concept map, after selective coding

